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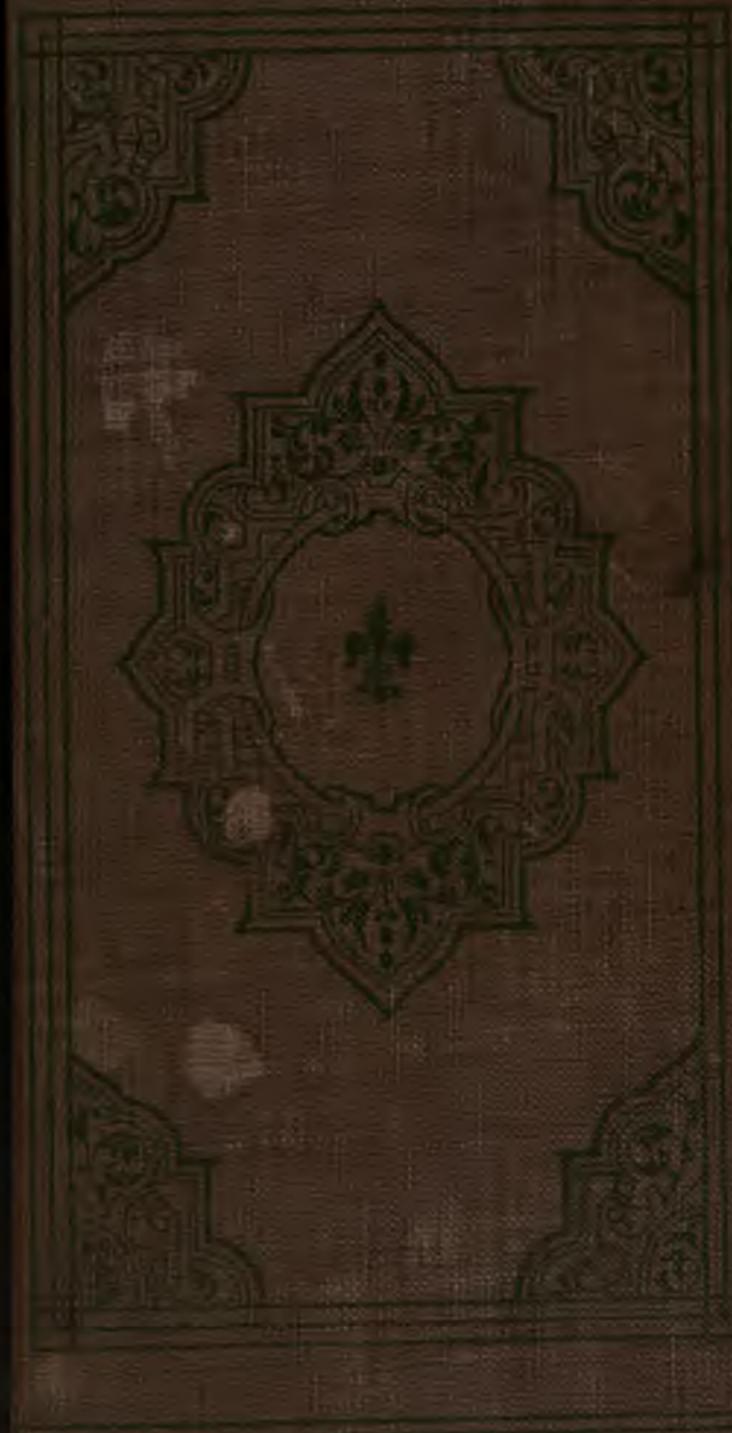
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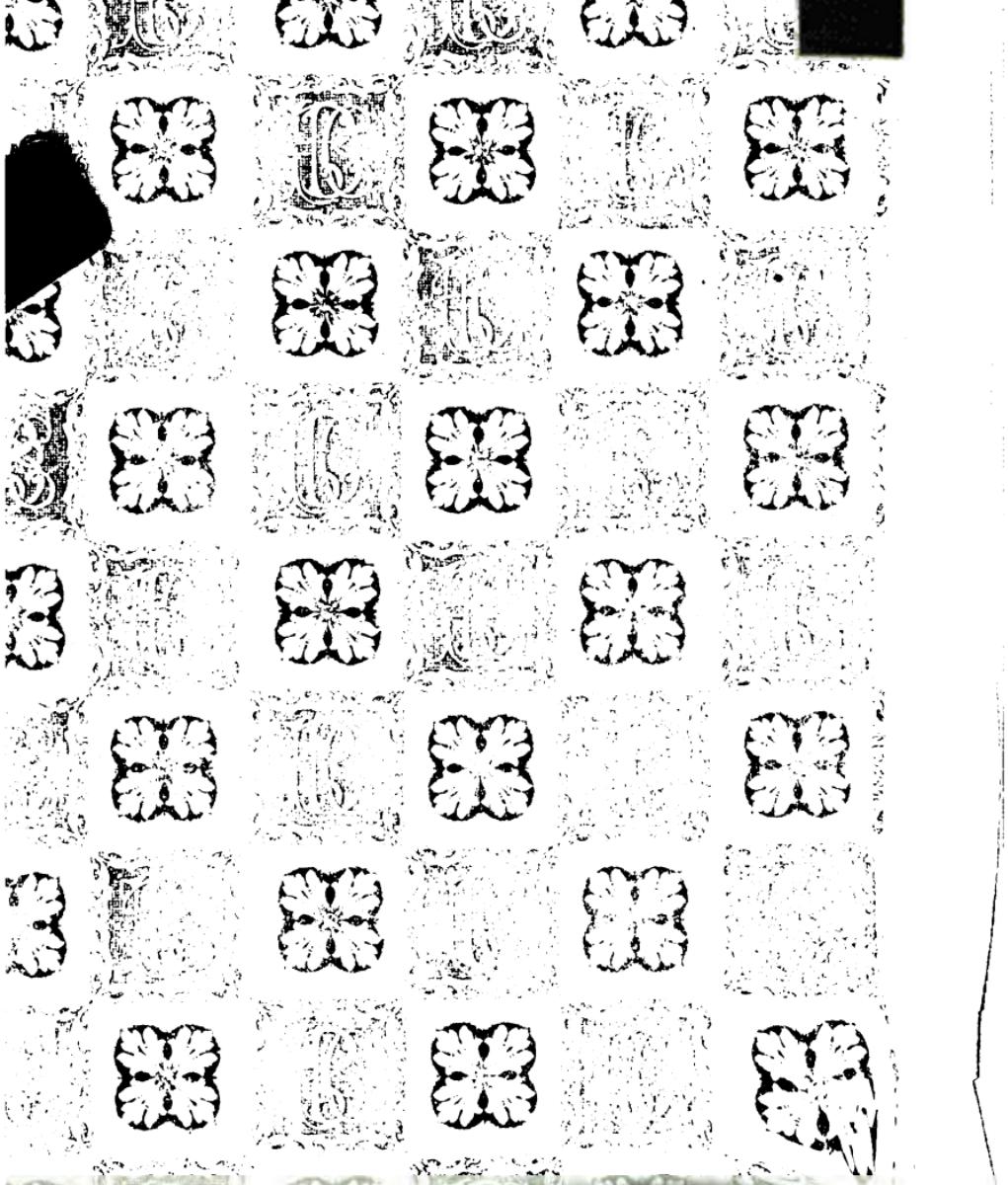
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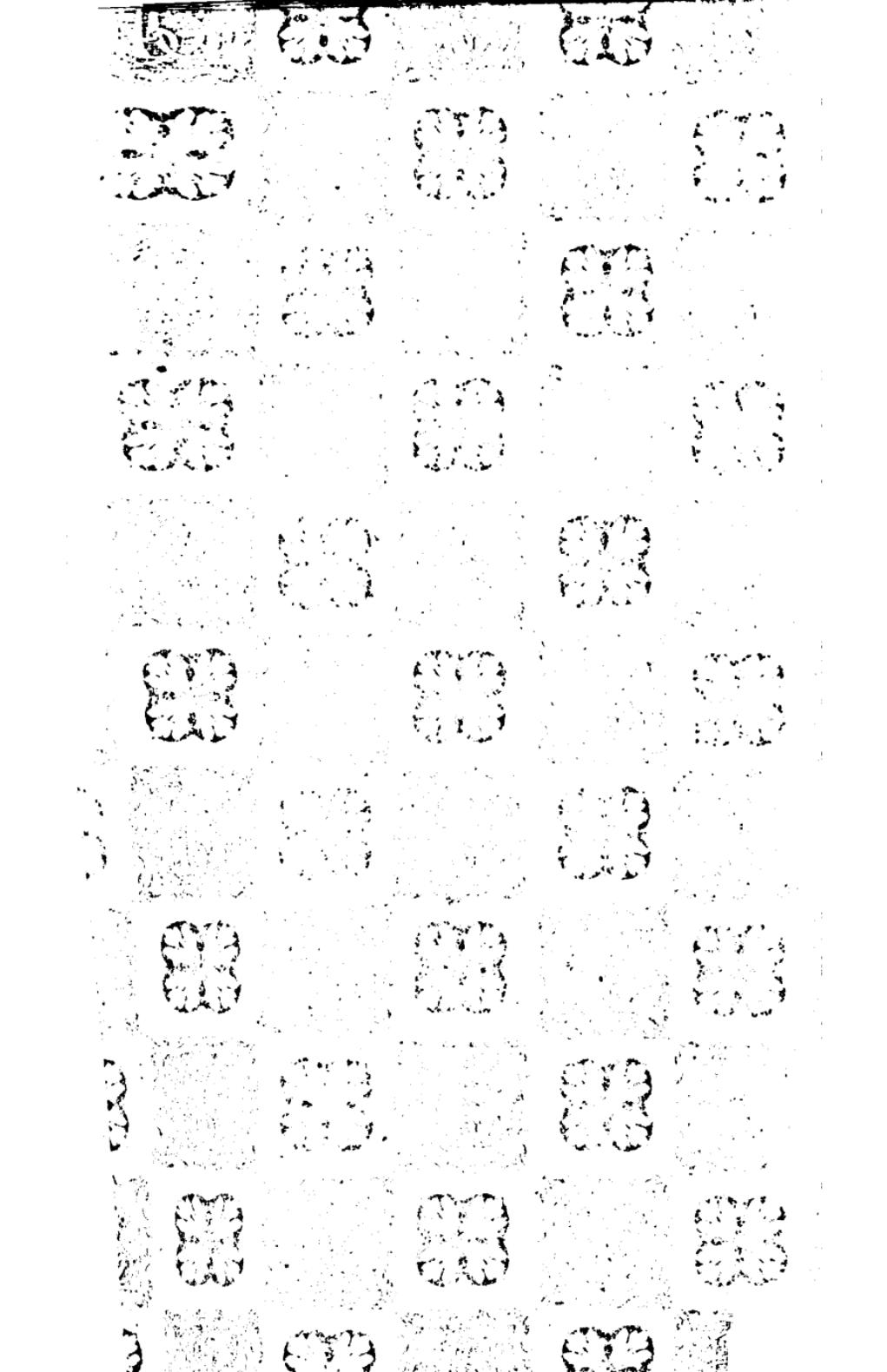
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# A COMMON STORY



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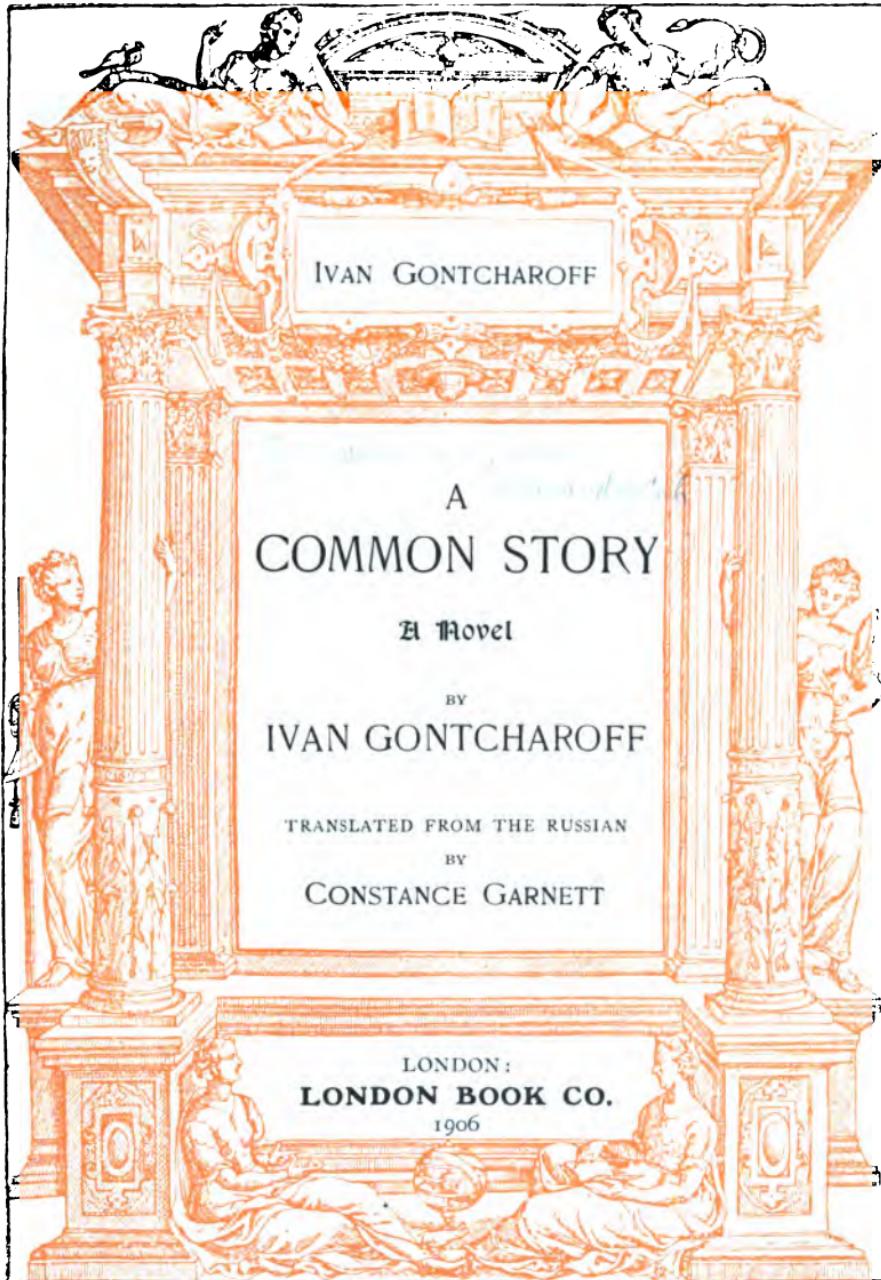
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IVAN GONTCHAROFF

A  
COMMON STORY

A Novel

BY  
IVAN GONTCHAROFF

TRANSLATED FROM THE RUSSIAN

BY

CONSTANCE GARNETT

LONDON:  
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## P R E F A C E

IT is a disadvantage to Gontcharoff to be introduced for the first time to English readers who are already acquainted with the writings of his more thrilling and vivid successors, Tourgenieff, Dostoieffsky and Tolstoi. In the rapid development of the Russian realistic novel, Gontcharoff takes the second place in point of time. He was the first man to be roused by the example of Gogol, who wrote, shortly before he died in 1852 : "I have pursued life in its reality, not in dreams of the imagination, and I have thus reached Him who is the source of life." So could those later masters whom I have mentioned say, but Gontcharoff, who came a little before them, and was the first to take up the challenge thrown down by Gogol, if he had not penetrated to the sacred essence of things, could at least maintain that he had studied life in its reality. And this is why, although he is no poet, and cannot rend the heart like the young men who came after him, he is deserving of all recognition as an element in modern Russian literature.

Ivan Alexandrovitch Gontcharoff was born at Simbirsk, on the Volga, on the 18th of June, 1813. His father, a rich merchant, died when the boy was three years old, and left him to the care of his mother and of his godfather, an aged retired officer of the navy. This old salt regaled the child with endless stories of adventures at sea, and awakened

in him a longing to sail about the world. At the village school to which he was sent, Ivan learnt French well from the wife of the pope of the parish, who had married a Frenchwoman. In 1825, he went to the Gymnasium in Moscow, where he was a diligent and blameless student. In 1831, he passed on to the University of Moscow, taking philology as his special subject. In 1835, he went up from the maternal house at Simbirsk, very much as Alexandre Fedoritch does in *A Common Story*, to St. Petersburg, and received at the Ministry of Finance the post of Translator.

The earliest literary work undertaken by Gontcharoff, was exclusively in the line of translation. He published several Russian versions of well-known foreign novels. As a man of letters, he was absolutely the child of a romantic interest in the poet Pouschkine. He has recorded the emotion with which he gazed at the poet when he was pointed out to him for the first time in the church of the Nikitsky monastery in Moscow. Several years later, at the shop of the publisher Smirdine, Gontcharoff was presented to Pouschkine, and from this time forth he was in the habit of meeting him frequently, particularly in the studio of Maikoff, the painter. At that time, Pouschkine was the centre of all the hopes and the enthusiasm of the youth of Russia. The news of the assassination of the poet, in 1837, produced a sort of despair among those whose aspirations he had encouraged, and whose thoughts he had led. Gontcharoff has written : "Never shall I forget the news of the death of Pouschkine. I was then a small employé in a public department. I had leisure enough to write a little, to translate, to study the poets, and to dabble in æsthetics. Winckelmann was my great hobby, but Pouschkine domi-

nated everything. His works held the place of honour on the book-shelves of my modest room. Every line he had published had been meditated upon and felt by me. And suddenly they come and tell me that some one had killed him, that he exists no longer! At that moment I was seated at my desk in my office. I groped my way out into the corridor, and then, with my face to the wall, I covered my eyes with my hands and wept bitterly. I wept as a lad weeps who receives a message that his mother is dead. . . . Three days later a portrait of Pouschkine appeared in the shop-windows, bearing these words, ‘The fire is extinguished on the altar.’ It was immediately seized and destroyed by the police.” The story recalls that of Tennyson’s boyish emotion at the news of the death of Byron.

To the influence of Pouschkine, romantic and inflammatory, succeeded that of Gogol, with his new naturalistic ideas. The publication of the first part of *Dead Souls*, in 1842, was an epoch for Gontcharoff, as for so many others. But he was slow in finding confidence to write. It was not until 1847 that he published, in the columns of a St. Petersburg newspaper, *Obyknovennaia istoriia*, which is here for the first time presented to English readers as *A Common Story*. The novel enjoyed a very great success, and, in 1848, it was succeeded by a lighter and more comic sketch of *bureau* life in St. Petersburg, called *Ivan Savite Poddjabrin*. In 1852, the Russian Government suggested to Gontcharoff that he should accompany Admiral Pontiatine, in the capacity of private secretary, on a voyage around the world. To see foreign countries had always been the first desire of his heart, and he accepted the offer with enthusiasm. The special mission of the admiral was to proceed to Japan to negotiate a new treaty of commerce.

The tour, which occupied three years, closed with a land-journey across the steppes and mountains of Siberia.

The events of this memorable expedition were described by Gontcharoff in two large volumes, *The Frigate "Pallada,"* 1856–57. To recover from the fatigue of his travels, Gontcharoff proceeded in 1857 to the baths of Marienbad, and there he wrote, in six weeks, the most famous of all his works, the novel called *Oblomoff*. It appeared in book-form in 1859. The rest of the novelist's life presented little that is of interest. In 1870, he published a third novel, *Obryv* ("The Abyss"). In 1873, he was made chief director of the general post-office in St. Petersburg. He published a bibliographical and critical study of the radical and free-thinking critic, Belinsky, who died in 1847; his own *Souvenirs*, in 1879; a story, *Mark the Nihilist*, in 1886; and other minor contributions to literature. He died, in his seventy-ninth year, on the 28th of September, 1891.

At the time of the death of Gontcharoff, the distinguished critic, Michel Zagoulaïeff, published a study of his work, from which I extract the following passages :

"More than forty years ago, replying to the question what was the position of Gontcharoff in Russian literary life, our great critic, Belinsky, with his astonishing prescience of the future, declared, after the publication of Gontcharoff's first novel, *A Common Story*, that the author of that book would never be anything but a 'great artist in words,' on account of the complete absence in him of all inclination to deal enthusiastically with any of the social questions of the day." We all know how hard Gontcharoff strove later on to protest against this verdict in a sort of *apologia* for his writings, entitled *Better Late than Never*. After having

enriched the literature of Russia with three masterpieces, *A Common Story*, *Oblomoff*, and *The Abyss*, the great writer attempted to prove that these three beautiful books possessed more than mere literary merit, and that he too, like Tourgenieff, Dostoieffsky and Count Leo Tolstoi, had the right to be considered a commentator on the social life of his age. This interesting point has been the subject of much debate. There are those who are of opinion that the immortal type of Oblomoff is a synthesis of a certain condition of intelligent humanity as general as those of Don Quixote and of Hamlet. Others hold that in creating the hero of the most perfect of his three great novels, Gontcharoff has done no more than portray his own character, and that even in Russia this type is not so universal as Dobroliouboff supposed when he created the word 'Oblomovism' to characterise the lack of energy supposed to be inherent in our national character. . . .

"When *A Common Story* first appeared, we were passing through a period of transition, social as well as literary. The struggle between the new ideas and the ideas imposed on Russian society by the political *régime* which had been in force since 1825, was only beginning. A vague prescience of some change in the near future created among Russians an instinctive demand for something more than a mere platonic profession of beautiful sentiments. When Gontcharoff contrasted with the dreaming and sentimental hero of his first novel the man of action whom he has depicted in Peter Adouev, the public at once perceived the piquancy of the bitter irony of the uncle in face of the nonchalant and effeminate idealism of Alexandre Adouev. What was not at first perceived was that the sympathies of the author were really all on the side of the latter. That was more

than Russian criticism, in those early days, could comprehend. The novel was written with an incomparable *maestria* of style, its author was proclaimed an 'artist' of the first order, and it was taken for granted that he was ironically indifferent to all that was fermenting in the Russian society of that time.

"Gontcharoff did not attempt to protest. On the contrary, when, several years later, he participated in the diplomatic mission of Admiral Pontiatine to Japan, he brought back from his voyage around the world nothing but picturesque memorials, in which we may vainly seek for the least trace of a serious interest in the somewhat important political work to which he had been called to contribute. His beautiful work, *The Frigate 'Pallada'*, is of deep interest in this connection, and we are astonished at the slight notice which has been given to it by the posthumous appreciators of the great writer.

"It was the novel called *Oblomoff* which raised the literary reputation of Gontcharoff to its height. Since the prose writings of Pouschkine, the Russian public had never been presented with a work of such technical perfection. The brilliant commentaries of Dobroliouboff, in spite of the paradoxical nature of that critic's explanation of the social range of the character of the hero of this novel, of the widespread presence of Oblomovism amongst us, placed Gontcharoff finally in the rank of those Russian writers who have understood their own age the best.

"When, many years later, *The Abyss* appeared, Dobroliouboff had passed away, and the views which he had defended with so much brilliant paradox were beginning to lose ground. This new novel was admired mainly for its literary qualities and no attempt was made to study its social

aim. Gontcharoff was so much distressed at this, that, in spite of his inveterate hatred of literary polemics, he himself undertook to produce a commentary on his novel, and he published that *Better Late than Never*, of which we have ✓ already spoken.

"The great writer declared, in this essay, that his three novels had had but one and the same purpose, that of illustrating the struggle between the new spirit which came from the West in consequence of Peter the Great's reforms, and the instinctive resistance of the national Russian character against this stream of foreign influence. In spite of all his explanations, he scarcely made it plain why, after showing himself a resolute partisan of the new ideas in *A Common Story* and in *Oblomoff*, he came to place himself quite as firmly, in *The Abyss*, on the side of the past, as against the present and the future. His position, when he had explained it, remained as enigmatical as it was before.

"The only way in which this enigma is to be solved, is, we think, by examining the personality of Gontcharoff himself. It has generally been held that of all the authors of the first order who adorned that literary Pleiad, of which ornaments he unquestionably was one of the purest and most splendid—Gontcharoff was also the most objective. He has always been represented as an impossible observer, disdainful even to indifference of the facts and the characters which he has depicted in his works. At the risk of seeming paradoxical, I venture to believe that this is a mistake, and that the basis of the three novels of the illustrious writer is nothing else than the permanent inward struggle between diametrically opposed sides of his own character. The two Adouevs of *A Common Story*, Oblomoff and Stoltz, Raïsky and his old aunt in *The Abyss*, seem to

me to be successive incarnations of the two contrasted facets of the soul of the man who created these types.

"By his temperament, Gontcharoff was all his life the typical representative of the national Russian *laissez-aller* against which his cultivated intelligence and his vast and varied knowledge energetically protested. This doubling of the type, so frequent with us Slavs, perpetually weighed down to the ground his great intellect and his beautiful soul. What will render immortal and for ever sympathetic to Russian readers the various works of this incomparable writer, is the constant recurrence in them of the most typical sides of our national character, the complexity of which is the real cause of all the incoherence of social life in Russia during nearly two centuries.

"When this is definitely understood and established, our critics will waste their time no longer in endeavouring to draw more or less ingenious parallels between Gontcharoff, on the one side, and Tourgenieff, Dostoieffsky and Tolstoi, on the other. The author of *Oblomoff* will take his place apart, and his works will be studied as a valuable testimony to a condition of mind which explains many of the historical faults which have been made in Russia during the last fifty years."

This lucid exposition of the place held by Gontcharoff among his contemporaries cannot, I think, fail to be of service to those who make their first acquaintance with him in the pages of *A Common Story*.

EDMUND GOSSE.

# A COMMON STORY

## CHAPTER I

IN the village of Grahae one summer day on the estate of Anna Pavlovna, a landowner of moderate means, every one in the house was up by daybreak, from its mistress to the house-dog Barbos.

But Anna Pavlovna's only son, Alexandre Fedoritch, was still sleeping the sound sleep of a boy of twenty; everyone else in the house was bustling and hurrying about. But they all walked on tip-toe and spoke in whispers, so as not to wake the young master. If any one made the least noise or spoke aloud, Anna Pavlovna would rush out at once like a lioness enraged and punish the indiscreet person with a severe rebuke or an abusive epithet, or, when her anger and her energy were equal to it, with a blow.

In the kitchen three servants were kept busy cooking on a scale fit for a dinner of ten persons, though the whole family consisted of no more than Anna Pavlovna and her son Alexandre Fedoritch. In the coach-house they were rubbing and greasing the carriage. All were busy and were working with all their might. Barbos was the only one who was doing nothing, but even he took a share in the general activity in his own way. When a groom or coachman came near him or a maid ran by, he wagged his tail and sniffed the passing figure anxiously, while his eyes seemed to ask: "Are they ever going to tell me why we are all in such a bustle to-day?"

The bustle was because Anna Pavlovna was sending her son to Petersburg to get a post in the Civil Service there, or, as she herself expressed it, to see the world and show

himself. A fatal day for her! This was why she was so broken-down and unhappy. Often in her distress she would open her mouth to give some direction, and would suddenly stop in the middle of a word, her voice failed and she turned aside, and wiped away her tears, or let them fall into the trunk which she was herself packing with Sashenka's linen.

Tears had long been gathering in her heart, they rose into her throat and choked her and were ready to burst out in torrents; but she was saving them up as it were for the leave-taking and did not often waste them drop by drop.

It was not only Anna Pavlovna who was grieved at the coming separation. Sashenka's valet, Yevsay, was also terribly distressed. He was to set off with his master to Petersburg, and had to leave the warmest corner in the house, a place on the stove in the room of Agrafena, the prime minister of Anna Pavlovna's household, who was also, a fact of prime importance to Yevsay, in charge of the keys of the stores.

Behind the stove there was only room for two chairs and a table, which was set with tea, coffee, and eatables. Yevsay had long had a place behind the stove and in the heart of Agrafena. On the other chair she was sitting herself.

The relations of Agrafena and Yevsay were by now ancient history in the household. They, like every one else in the world, had been the subject of gossip and scandal, and then like every one else they had been dropped. Even their mistress had grown used to seeing them together, and for ten whole years they had been happy. Can many people out of all their lives count up ten years of happiness? And now the moment of parting was at hand. Good-bye to the warm corner, good-bye to Agrafena Ivanovna, no more playing cards, and coffee and vodka and liqueurs—good-bye to it all!

Yevsay sat in silence, sighing deeply.

Agrafena, with a frown on her face, was bustling about her duties. She showed her sorrow in her own peculiar way. She poured out tea to-day with exasperation, and instead of giving the first cup of strong tea to her mistress as usual, she poured it away, as though she could not bear any one to get the benefit of it, and she took all reproof with stolid indifference.

She boiled the coffee too long, the cream was burnt, the cups slipped out of her hands. She could not put the tray down on the table without a crash ; she could not shut the cupboard or the doors without slamming them. She did not shed tears, but was angry with everything and everybody instead. This, however, was always a prominent characteristic of hers. She was not often contented ; things were mostly not to her taste ; she used to grumble and complain of everything. But at this moment, so fatal for her, her character showed its full capabilities. More than anything she seemed to be angry with Yevsay.

"Agrafena Ivanovna !" he said in a sad subdued voice, quite out of keeping with his tall stout figure.

"Well, why did you sit down there, you booby ?" she asked, just as though he had taken a seat there for the first time. "Get along with you, I want to get out a towel."

"Ah, Agrafena Ivanovna !" he repeated lazily, sighing and getting up from his chair, and then at once falling back into it when she had taken the towel.

"He can do nothing but whimper ! Here the fellow sticks ! Good Lord, what a nuisance, there's no getting rid of him !"

And she dropped her spoon with a loud clank into the slop-basin.

"Agrafena !" broke in suddenly from the other room, "are you out of your senses ? Don't you know that Sashenka is resting ? Have you come to blows, or what is it, at parting with your sweetheart ?"

"Mustn't stir for you—have to sit like the dead !" Grafena hissed like a snake, wiping a cup with both hands as though she would have liked to have broken it to pieces.

"Good-bye, good-bye," said Yevsay, with a colossal sigh, "it's the last day, Agrafena Ivanovna !"

"And thank God for it ! The devil's welcome to you for all I care, there will be more room. There—get along, one can't stir a step ; you straddle your long legs all over the place !"

He touched her on the shoulder ; how she answered him ! He sighed again, but did not move from his place, and it would have been quite needless if he had ; Grafena did not really wish him to go. Yevsay knew this, and was not uneasy.

"Who will take my place, I wonder?" he asked always with a sigh.

"The devil!" she answered abruptly.

"So long as it's not Proshka. But who will play cards with you?"

"Well, if it were Proshka, what does it matter to you?" she asked angrily.

Yevsay got up.

"Don't play with Proshka, for mercy's sake, don't," he said anxiously, and almost menacingly.

"But who can prevent me? You, pray, you scarecrow?"

"My darling, Agrafena Ivanovna!" he began imploringly, seizing her round the waist, I should have said, if there had been any sign of a waist about her.

She responded to his embrace by a sharp elbow in his chest.

"My darling, Agrafena Ivanovna!" he repeated, "will Proshka love you as I do? Look at him; what an impudent fellow he is; not a woman in the house he does not make up to. But me—ah! you are the only woman in the world for me. If it were not the master's will—oh!"

He choked at this point, and waved his hand in the air.

Agrafena could hold out no longer; even her sorrow at last found vent in tears.

"But will you go away from me, you villain?" she said, weeping. "What are you chattering about, stupid? Me keep company with Proshka! Can't you see for yourself that you can never get a word of sense out of him? He can do nothing but try to put his stupid arms round one."

"Did he do that? Oh, the brute! And you never told me! I'd have shown him."

"Let him try it on! Am I the only petticoat in the house? Me keep company with Proshka! What an idea! Even to sit by him makes me sick, the pig! And you have always to be on the look out with him, or he's trying to gobble up something on the sly; but you don't notice it, of course!"

"If such a thing should happen, Agrafena Ivanovna—the devil's too strong for us, you know—better let Grishka have my place here; at least he's a civil fellow and hard working; he didn't sneer——"

"There's an idea now!" Agrafera fell upon him. "Why do you foist some one on me, as if I were like—like that! Go away, I say. It's not the likes of me to go and throw myself into any one else's arms. Only with you, you wretch, the devil truly led me into temptation, and I repent it. The very idea!"

"God bless you for your goodness! it's a weight off my heart!" Yevsay cried.

"You're glad!" she shrieked savagely again; "it is a good thing you're glad at something—be as glad as you like."

And her lips grew white with anger. Both were silent.

"Agrafera Ivanovna," said Yevsay timidly, after a short pause.

"Well, what now?"

"Why, I was quite forgetting; not a drop nor a morsel of anything have I tasted this morning."

"Oh, that's what you're after."

"I couldn't eat for sorrow, my dear."

She took from the bottom shelf of the cupboard, from behind a loaf of sugar, a glass of vodka and two huge slices of bread and ham. All this had long before been made ready for him by her own careful hand.

She threw them to him, as one would hardly throw a bone to a dog.

One piece fell on the floor.

"Here, then, ready for you! yes! for you, may it choke you. But hush, don't munch for all the house to hear!"

She turned away from him with an expression of simulated aversion, but he slowly began to eat, looking doubtfully at Agrafera and covering his mouth with one hand.

Meanwhile the coachman appeared at the gates with the three horses, and took them under the shelter of the stable. Removing his cap, he took out of it a dirty towel and rubbed the sweat off his face. Anna Pavlovna saw him from the window, and she turned pale. Her knees trembled under her, and her arms hung limp, although she had been expecting it. Recovering herself with an effort, she called for Agrafera.

"Go on tiptoe, quietly, and see whether Sashenka is asleep," she said. "He will sleep too long, dear heart,

perhaps, and it is the last day ; so I shall see nothing of him. But no ! you can't do it. You'll be sure to thump into the room like a cow. I had better go myself."

And she went.

"Go on, then, you're not a cow, I suppose" grumbled Agrafena to herself. "A cow, indeed ! you'd be glad of a few more such cows !"

Alexandr Fedoritch himself met Anna Pavlovna on her way, a fair young man in all the bloom of youth, health and strength. He said good-morning cheerfully to his mother, but suddenly catching sight of the trunk and packages he seemed rather disturbed, walked away to the window in silence, and began to draw with his finger on the window-pane. After a minute he spoke again to his mother and looked unconcernedly, even with pleasure, at the preparations for the journey.

"What made you sleep so late, dearie ?" said Anna Pavlovna, "isn't your face a little swollen ? Let me moisten your eyes and cheeks with some rose-water.

"No, I don't want any, mamma."

"What will you like for breakfast ? Would tea be best or coffee ? I have ordered some beef cutlets and sour cream fritters—what will you have ?"

"It's all the same to me, mamma."

Anna Pavlovna went on packing the linen, then stopped and gazed at her son with a look of anguish.

"Sasha !" she said, after a pause.

"What do you want, mamma ?"

She hesitated to speak, as if she were afraid of something.

"Where are you going, my dear one, and why ?" she asked at last in a low voice.

"How, where, mamma ? To Petersburg—why ?—why to—"

"Listen, Sasha," she said with great emotion, placing her hand on his shoulder, evidently with the intention of making a last appeal ; "it is not too late ; think again, and stop."

"Stop ! but how is it possible ? Look, my clothes are packed," he said, not knowing what to say.

"Your clothes packed, but there !—there !—see, now they are unpacked."

In three armfuls she had emptied all out of the trunk.

"How can it be so, mamma? I am all ready—and to change so suddenly—what will they say?"

He looked distressed.

"It is not so much for my own sake as for yours, that I persuade you not to go. Why are you going? To try and find happiness. But have you not been happy here, I wonder? Does not your mother think of nothing else all day long but how to gratify every wish of yours? Of course, at your age now, your mother's devotion alone is not enough for your happiness: and I don't expect it. Well, look round you; every one is eager to please you. And Maria Karpovna's daughter, Sonushka? There—you blushed. Ah, my darling, how she loves you—God bless her! They say she has not slept for three nights!"

"There! Mamma! how you talk! She is so—"

"Yes, yes! as though I don't see. Ah, and, by-the-by, she has taken your handkerchiefs to hem. 'I won't let anyone else do them,' she said, 'I will mark them myself.' You see. What more would you have? Stay!"

He listened in silence, hanging his head and playing with the tassel of his dressing-gown.

"What will you find in Petersburg?" she continued. "Do you think you will find life as easy there as here? Oh, my dear, God knows what you may have to bear and put up with; you will suffer cold and hunger and want. There are plenty of bad people everywhere, but you won't meet with good ones so easily. As for social consideration, whether you are in town or country, you will be just as much a person of consideration. Suppose you don't see Petersburg society—still you may think yourself the best in the land living here; and so it is in everything, my dear one. You are a well-educated, fine, good-looking fellow. I am an old woman, and the only happiness left me in this world is the sight of you. You might marry, God might bless you with children, and I could nurse them and you could live without troubles or anxiety, a peaceful tranquil life, envying no man—but there, perhaps things may not go well—perhaps you will remember my words. Sashenka! stay!"

He coughed and sighed, but did not utter a word.

"And look out here," she continued, opening the door on to the balcony; "are not you sorry yourself to be leaving such a home?"

From the balcony came a fresh scent. Round the house right into the distance stretched the garden, full of old lime trees, thick wild roses, service-berries, and bushes of lilac. And among the trees were beds of bright-coloured flowers, and here and there, little paths ran zigzagging in and out, while in the distance was a softly splashing lake, on one side golden with the rays of the morning sun and smooth as glass, on the other as dark-blue as the sky mirrored in it, and stirred by faint ripples. And then an amphitheatre formed by the fields of waving corn and bordered by a dark forest.

Anna Pavlovna, screening her eyes from the sun with one hand, with the other pointed out every object in turn to her son.

"Look!" she said, "how abundantly God has blessed our meadows! There, from that field of rye alone we shall harvest four thousand bushels; and there is the wheat and the buckwheat: only the buckwheat is not as good this year as last; it looks as though it will be poor. And the forest too! how the forest has grown! Think how great is the wisdom of God! The fuel from our share we shall sell for a thousand at least. And the game, too! And you know all this is yours, my dear; I am only your steward. Look at the lake, how splendid! It is really heavenly! The fish are in shoals there; we only need to buy sturgeon; the carp and the perch and the gremilles are simply swarming, we have enough for ourselves and our people as well. Over there are your cows and horses grazing. Here you alone are master of all, but in Petersburg I daresay everybody will think himself as good as you are. And you want to run away from all this plenty, you don't even know what you are running to—to your ruin perhaps. God help you! Do stay!"

He was silent.

"But you are not listening," she said. "What are you looking at so steadily?"

He pointed with his hand silently and thoughtfully into the distance. Anna Pavlovna looked and her face fell.

There between the fields ran a path twisting like a snake and disappearing into the forest, the path to the promised land—to Petersburg.

Anna Pavlovna was silent for some minutes, trying to recover herself.

"That's how it is, then!" she said at last, sadly. "Well, my dear, God bless you! Go, then, if you are so bent on it. I will not oppose it. You shall not say anyway that your mother monopolised your young life."

Poor mother! This is all the recompense for your love! Was not this what you expected?

Ah, but mothers expect no recompense. A mother's love is without reason, without power of choice. If you are great, renowned, proud, handsome, if your name is on men's lips, and your exploits make a noise in the world, then your old mother's head is trembling with happiness, she weeps and laughs and prays long and fervently. And the son, for the most part, does not even think of sharing his triumphs with his mother. If you are poor in mind and spirit, if nature has stamped you with the stigma of deformity, and the pangs of disease torture you body and soul, or if men spurn you from them and there is no place for you among them—the more place for you in your mother's heart. She clasps her misshapen, deficient child all the closer to her heart, and her prayers are still longer and more fervent.

How can we blame Alexandr for egoism, because he was determined to leave home? He was twenty. From his nursery life had been all smiles for him—his mother idotised him and spoiled him, as mothers do spoil an only son; his nurses all sang to him from his cradle that he would walk in gold and never know sorrow; his teachers declared that he would do something, and, in addition to the adoration of his own household, the daughter of their neighbour smiled on him. And the old cat, Vaska, seemed to be more amiable to him than to any one else in the house.

Sorrow, tears, trouble—all that he knew of only by hearsay, as we know of some disease, which has not appeared openly, but which lurks hidden away somewhere in men. So the future presented itself to him in rainbow colours. Something beckoned him into the distance, but what precisely, that he could not tell. Seductive phantoms glimmered before him, but he could never catch a close view of them; he could hear mingled sounds—now the

voice of glory, now the voice of love—and all moved him to a sweet unrest.

The world of his home soon seemed narrow to him. Nature, and his mother's fondness, the devotion of his nurses and of all the household, his soft bed, and dainty food and purring cats—all these comforts, so dearly prized in the decline of life, he would have gladly exchanged for the unknown, full of alluring and mysterious fascination. Even his love for Sophia—a first, soft, rosy love—did not restrain him. What was this love to him? He dreamed of a colossal passion which should achieve great exploits and triumph over every obstacle. He loved Sophia meanwhile with a small love while waiting for the greater. He dreamed, too, of great deeds in his country's service. He studied many subjects and diligently. On his certificate it was recorded that he had mastered some dozen sciences and half-dozen languages, ancient and modern. Above all he dreamed of making a name as a writer. His verses were the admiration of his school-fellows. Before him stretched a number of paths; and they seemed each better than the other. He did not know into which to throw himself. Only the straight path was hidden from his eyes; had he seen it, even now perhaps he would not have gone away.

How could he stay? His mother wished it—that was quite another matter and very natural. In her heart all feelings had died away except one—love for her son, and it clutched feverishly at this last object. Except for him what was left for her? Nothing but death. It has long been an accepted fact that a woman's heart cannot live without love.

Alexandr had been spoiled, but was not demoralised by his home life. He was so happily formed by Nature that his mother's love and the adoration of all around him only influenced him in a good direction, prematurely awakening, for example, his sympathetic feelings, and inspiring in him an excessive confidence in every one. This very fact perhaps tended to kindle ambition in him, but ambition in itself is only a mould; all will depend on what is the substance you pour into it.

By far the greatest danger for him was the fact that his mother, for all her devotion to him, could not give him a true view of life, and did not prepare him for the struggle

which awaited him and awaits every man in his turn. But this would have needed a master hand, a clear intellect, and a fund of great experience not bounded by the narrow provincial horizon. It would have needed some one who was even able to love him rather less, not to think of him every minute, not to remove out of his way every care and every obstacle, not to weep and to suffer in his place even in his childhood, so as to enable him to feel the approach of difficulties for himself, to meet them with his own forces, and to think for his own future—in a word, to understand that he is a man. How was Anna Pavlovna to know all this, still more to put it into practice? The reader has seen what she was. Would he not like to see more of her?

She had already forgotten her son's selfishness. Alexandr Fedoritch found her engaged in packing a second time his clothes and linen. In the bustle and the preparations for the journey she had apparently completely forgotten her sorrow.

"Here, Sashenka, notice well where I put things," she said. "Below everything, at the bottom of the trunk, the sheets, a dozen. Look, is it right in the list?"

"Yes, mamma."

"All with your mark, you see. A. F. A., all our darling Sonushka. Without her our stupid creatures would not have been ready for a long time. What next? Ah, the pillow-cases. One, two, three, four—yes, all the dozen here. Here are your shirts, three dozen—what linen! Look at it—it's Dutch make—I drove myself to the shop, to Vassili Vassilitch's; he brought out the three best pieces he had. Mind you count them over by the list, dear boy, every time you get them home from the laundress; they are all bran new. You won't see many such shirts in Petersburg, very likely they will change them; there are such dishonest creatures to be sure, who have no fear of God. Socks—twenty-two pairs. Do you know what I have thought of? To put your pocket-book with your money in a sock. You will not need any till you get to Petersburg—so God grant, if anything should happen, they may rummage but they will not find it. And the letter to your uncle I have put there, too; how delighted he will be to be sure! Here's seventeen years gone by and we've never sent a word to one another—that's a long time. Here are your neckties, and

here are the handkerchiefs ; one half-dozen is still with Sonushka. Don't tear your handkerchiefs, my darling ; they are all good cambric. I bought them at Mehéev's at two and a quarter roubles a yard. Now, that's all the linen. Now your clothes. But where is Yevsay ? Why isn't he looking on ? Yevsay ! "

Yevsay came lazily into the room.

" What are your orders ? " he asked still more lazily.

" What are my orders ? " repeated Anna Pavlovna angrily. " Why aren't you looking where I pack the things ? But when you want anything on the journey, you will go and turn everything topsy-turvy. He can't tear himself from his sweetheart, such a treasure ! The day is long enough, you will have plenty of time. Is this how you mean to look after your master in Petersburg ? You had better be careful. Look here : these are the dress clothes ; you see where I lay them ? And you, Sashenka, be careful of them ; don't wear them every day ; the cloth cost sixteen roubles a yard. When you go to see the best people wear it and don't sit down all anyhow, like your auntie, who never could sit down on an empty chair or sofa, but was bound to go and plump down where some one had put a hat or some such thing ; the other day she sat down on a saucer of jam—such a mess she made ! When you go out rather more quietly wear this coat here. Now your waistcoats—one, two, three, four. Two pairs of trousers. Well, there are clothes to last you the next three years. Ah ! I am tired and no mistake, the whole morning I have been on my legs. You can go, Yevsay. Let us talk a little of something else. Soon our guests will be here, and then there will be no time." She sat down on the sofa and made her son sit down beside her.

" Well, Sasha," she said after a short silence, " you are now going to a strange land."

" A strange land ! Petersburg ! How you talk, mamma."

" Wait a little, wait a little, hear what I want to say ! God alone knows what awaits you there, what you will meet with, good and bad. I trust He, our Father in Heaven, will guard you ; and you, my dear, above all, don't forget Him ; remember that without faith there is no salvation anywhere or in anything. You will take a good position there, you will mix with people of consequence--indeed, we

are as good as anybody ; your father was a nobleman, a major—all the same, humble yourself before the Lord God ; pray both in good fortune and in bad ; and not like the proverb—‘the peasant does not cross himself till he hears the thunder.’ There are men, who, while they have good luck, don’t even go to church, and then when they come to grief, they will put up candles at a rouble a piece, and will give alms to the poor—that is a great sin. And while we are talking of the poor—don’t waste money on them too often, don’t give away too much. Why should you spoil them ? They won’t think any the more of you for it. They will spend it in drink and only laugh at you. You have a soft heart, I know ; you would be ready, I dare say, to give away even a sixpenny piece. No, that’s not necessary ; God will provide ! Will you visit the house of God ? Will you go every Sunday to Mass ?”

She sighed.

Alexandr was silent. He remembered that while he was studying at the university and living in the capital of the province, he had not been very zealous in going to church, and in the country it was only from desire to please his mother that he had accompanied her to mass. He was ashamed to tell a lie. His mother understood his silence and sighed again.

“ Well, I won’t compel you,” she continued, “ you are a young man—how could you be as zealous in the house of God as an old woman like me ? Perhaps your official duties now will hinder you, or you will be staying late at some grand houses and will oversleep yourself. God will have pity on your youth. Don’t be troubled ; you have a mother ; she will not oversleep. So long as there is a drop of blood left in my body, so long as my tears are not dried up in my eyes, and God has compassion on my sins, I will crawl, if I have not the strength to walk, along the road to church. I will give my last breath, I will shed my last tear for you, my dear. My prayers shall win you health and position and decorations and heavenly and earthly blessings. Can it be that He, our Father in Heaven, will despise the prayers of a poor old woman ? For myself I want nothing. Let Him take everything from me, health, life, sight—only may He grant you every pleasure, every happiness and good—”

She could not finish. Tears began to fall from her eyes. Alexandr jumped up from his place. "Mamma," he said.

"There, sit down, sit down!" she replied, hastily wiping away her tears. "I have still a great deal more to talk to you about. What was I going to say? It's gone out of my head. You see what a memory I have. Ah! keep the fasts, my dear. That is a great thing! On Wednesdays and Fridays, God will pardon it, but Lent—God forbid! Look at Mikhaïlo Mikhaïlitch, he thought himself an enlightened man, but what happened to him? Festival and fast alike—he eat as greedily as ever. It positively makes my hair stand on end. He gave to the poor to be sure, but was his charity acceptable to the Lord? They say he once gave a sovereign to an old man; he took it to be sure, but turned his back and spat. All bowed to him, and God knows what they said to his face, but behind his back they crossed themselves when they thought of him, as though he were a devil."

Alexandr listened with some impatience and gazed from time to time out of window at the distant road.

She was silent for a minute.

"Take care of your health before all things," she continued. "If you are seriously ill—which God forbid!—write. I will make a great effort and come to you. Who would look after you in Petersburg? Why they would even seize the opportunity to rob you in your sickness. Don't go into the streets after dark; keep away from ferocious-looking people. Take care of your money—save it for a rainy day. Spend it reasonably. From money—the accursed thing—comes everything good and evil. Don't be extravagant; don't waste it on needless whims. You will receive from me, without fail, two thousand five hundred roubles a year. Two thousand five hundred roubles is no small matter. Don't spend it on any kind of luxury, nothing of that sort, only don't deny yourself anything you can have; if you want any dainty, don't grudge the money. Don't give way to wine; ah, it is the greatest enemy of mankind! And," here she dropped her voice, "beware of women! I know them. There are creatures so shameless, that they will throw themselves on your neck when they see such a—" She looked lovingly at her son.

"That's enough, mamma ; isn't it time I had my breakfast ?" he asked almost with vexation.

"Directly—directly—now one word more. Don't set your heart on the wife of another," she went on hurriedly, "that is a great sin! 'Do not covet your neighbour's wife is written in the Scriptures. If any woman there tries to get hold of you—to marry you—God forbid!—don't dare to think of it ! They will be ready to entrap you, when they see you have money and are good-looking. I daresay at your chief's or at some other distinguished and wealthy grandee's, they will set their caps at you and try to make a match for their daughters. Well, then, it might be, only write to me. I will come somehow and will see that they are not palming off just any girl on you, simply to get rid of her, some old maid or poor creature. Every one will try to make up to a match like you. But if you yourself fall in love, and she proves to be a good girl—well then," here she lowered her voice, "Sonushka need not be considered." (The old woman in her love for her son was ready even to act against her conscience.) "After all, what was Maria Karpovna thinking about ? Her daughter is no match for you. A country girl ! There are others besides her who would be glad to get hold of you."

"Sophia—no, mamma—I shall never forget her," said { Alexandr.

"Well, well, my dear, never mind, I only mentioned it. Work a little in your situation, come home here and then, as God sees fit—there are always plenty of girls. If you don't forget her—well, then. But if—"

She wanted to say more, but had not the heart; and bending to his ear she asked softly, "And will you remember—your mother ?"

"See what you've worked yourself up to," he interrupted, "please let them serve what you have, omelet or whatever it is. Forget you ; how could you imagine such a thing ? May God punish me !"

"Hush, hush, Sasha," she broke in quickly ; "why are you calling down such things on your head ? No, no, whatever happens, if such a thing comes to pass, let me suffer alone. You are young, you are only beginning life, you will have friends, you will marry—a young woman will

fill the place of your mother and of every one for you. No, may God bless you as I bless you!"

She kissed him on the forehead and so ended her sermon

"But why is it nobody comes?" she said. "Not Maria Karpovna, nor Anton Ivanitch nor the priest are come. The mass must be over by now, I should think. Ah, here is some one coming! Anton Ivanitch, I fancy—yes, it is he; speak of the devil——"

Who does not know Anton Ivanitch? He is a Wandering Jew. He has existed always, everywhere, from the most ancient times, and has never become extinct. He was present at the Greek and Roman symposiums, and certainly tasted the fatted calf killed by the happy father on the return of the Prodigal Son.

Among us in Russia he takes various forms. The one in question had twelve serfs mortgaged over and over again; he lived almost in a hut, a kind of queer building resembling a loghouse—the entrance somewhere behind over some timber, close up to the hedge; but for twelve years he had been continually declaring that in the following spring he would start building a new house. He kept no housekeeper in his house. There was not a man of his acquaintance who had dined, supped or drunk a cup of tea in his house, but also there was not a man with whom he had not dined, supped or drunk tea fifty times a year. In days gone by Anton Ivanitch used to walk about in loose pantaloons and a full skirted overcoat, now he wears on weekdays a surtout and trousers, on holidays, a frock-coat—of what sort of cut God only knows. In figure he is fat, because he has no sorrows, no cares, no emotions, though he pretends that he spends his whole life in the sorrows and cares of others; but it is well-known that the sorrows and cares of others do not make us thin; that is a fact admitted on all hands.

In reality Anton Ivanitch was never of use to any one, yet without him not a single ceremony took place, not a wedding, nor a funeral. He was at all the formal dinners and evening parties and at all family gatherings; no one would stir a step without him. You may imagine perhaps that he was very useful, giving good advice here, arranging some difficulty there. Not a bit of it! No-one had ever

entrusted him with anything of the kind ; he understood nothing, could do nothing ; could not manage a matter in the law courts, could not act as go-between or mediator, could do absolutely nothing.

But yet they did commission him sometimes to call in and take a polite message from such a one to such a one, and he takes it without fail and seizes the opportunity to get a breakfast there ; or to inform such a one that certain papers have been received, but their exact nature they would not confide to him ; or to take somewhere a little jar of honey or a handful of seeds with the precept "not to spill and not to spoil ;" or to carry congratulations on some one's birthday. And they employ Anton Ivanitch, too, in such matters as they consider it unsuitable to leave to a servant. "We can't send Petrushka, he would be sure to make a mistake about it. 'No, better let Anton Ivanitch go with it ! It would never do to send a man ; so and so would be offended, better get Anton Ivanitch to go !'

So every one would have been astonished if he were nowhere to be seen at a dinner or a supper. "But where is Anton Ivanitch ?" every one would be sure to ask in surprise. "What's wrong with him ?—why isn't he here ?" And the dinner would hardly seem a dinner at all.

Anton Ivanitch came in and took Anna Pavlovna's hand.

"Good-morning, ma'am, good-morning, Anna Pavlovna ! I have the honour of congratulating you on something new."

"What is that, Anton Ivanitch ?" inquired Anna Pavlovna, looking at herself from head to foot.

"Why the little bridge at the gates ! You must have only just had it put up. Why, I listened—the planks didn't dance under my feet. I looked, and it was new !"

He always used when he met acquaintances to congratulate them on something or other, either on Lent, or on the spring, or on the autumn ; if, after a spell of warm weather, frost had set in, then he would congratulate them on the frost, if the frost had just broken up, then on the thaw.

On this occasion there was nothing of this kind to fix on, but he still managed to find something.

"Kind regards to you from Alexandra Vassilievna, Matrena Mihailovna and Piotr Sergeitch," said he.

"I thank you sincerely, Anton Ivanitch ! Are their children well ?"

"Yes, thanks be to God. I bring you the blessing of the church, the good father is just on my heels. But have you heard, ma'am, our good Semen Arkhipytch?"

"What is it?" asked Anna Pavlovna, in dismay.

"Ah, he has taken leave of us for ever."

"You don't say it? When did it happen?"

"Yesterday morning. They sent to let me know in the evening; a lad galloped up; and I set off and did not sleep all night. They were all in tears; I had to console them and see to everything; every one in the house was quite overcome, nothing but weeping. I was all alone."

"Merciful heavens," said Anna Pavlovna, shaking her head, "such is life! But how could it happen? Only this week he sent us his greetings."

"Yes, ma'am—ah! but he had been ailing a long while, the old man was a good age, the wonder is that he had never been laid up till now."

"A good age? He was only a year older than my poor husband. Well, God's peace be with him!" said Anna Pavlovna, crossing herself. "I am grieved for poor Fedosia Petrovna, she is left with little children on her hands, it's a serious matter—five, and almost all little girls. And when is the funeral to be?"

"To-morrow."

"Ah, every heart has its own sorrow, Anton Ivanitch, here am I seeing my son off."

"There's no help for it, Anna Pavlovna, we are all mortal; 'man is born to sorrow,' is written in the Scriptures."

"Well, don't be vexed with me for distressing you a little, let us sorrow together; you love us like one of our own family."

"Ah, Anna Pavlovna! and whom could I love as I do you? Have I many friends like you? You know how precious you are. I have so many cares, and that reminds me of my building. Only yesterday I was disputing all the morning with the contractor, but somehow we could not agree on anything. Yet how, thought I, am I to keep away? What, thought I, will she do without me? She is no longer young. Why she will be beside herself!"

"God reward you, Anton Ivanitch, for not forgetting us! And, indeed, I am not myself; my head is in such a whirl."

I can see nothing ; my throat is sore with crying. I beg you to take a little to eat ; you must be tired and hungry."

"I thank you sincerely. I confess that I had a drop at Piotr Sergeitch's as I was passing and took a mouthful with him. But that is no hindrance. The father is coming ; let him give the benediction. Yes, here he is on the stairs ! "

The priest came in. Maria Karpovna, too, arrived with her daughter, a plump and rosy girl, with a smile and tearful eyes. The eyes and the whole expression of face of Sophia said plainly : "I will love simply without caprice, I will be married like a nursemaid, and will obey my husband in everything and never think I know better than he ; indeed, and how could one know better than one's husband ? it would be a sin. I will be diligent in housekeeping and sewing ; I will bear him half-a-dozen children, and will suckle them, tend them, dress them and make their clothes." The plumpness and brilliance of her cheeks and the fine contours of her throat confirmed the promise of robust motherhood. But the tears in her eyes and her pathetic smile lent her at this moment a more romantic interest.

Before anything else they listened to a prayer, for which Anton Ivanitch called in the domestics, lighted the candle, and took the book from the priest, when he had finished reading it, and handed it to the deacon, and afterwards poured the holy water into a little flask and put it into his pocket, saying "That's for Agafea Nikitishnya." They sat down to table. Except Anton Ivanitch and the priest, they could hardly eat a morsel, but to make up for this, Anton Ivanitch did full justice to the Homeric breakfast. Anna Pavlovna kept weeping and stealthily wiping her eyes.

"Don't keep on so, ma'am," said Anton Ivanitch with assumed vexation, pouring out some liqueur for himself. "Why, are you sending him to certain death, do you imagine ?" Then he drank up half the liqueur and smacked his lips.

"What liqueur ! What an aroma it has ! Ah, ma'am, you wouldn't find such liqueur anywhere in the district !" he said, with an expression of great pleasure.

"It is no more than thr-ee-ee years old !" said Anna Pavlovna, sobbing, "it has—only to-day—been uncorked for you.

"Ah, Anna Pavlovna, it makes me ill to see you,

began Anton Ivanitch again, "I don't know what you deserve."

"But only imagine, Anton Ivanitch, an only son, and he going out of my sight; it will kill me and there will be no one to bury me."

"And what do we count for? What? Am I a stranger or what? And why in such a hurry to die? More likely to be married than that—I would dance at the wedding. But do give over crying."

"I cannot, Anton Ivanitch, indeed I cannot; I don't know myself why my tears will come."

"The idea of keeping such a young man shut up! Let him have his freedom, he will find his wings, and then he will do wonders; there he will gain a position."

"Good luck to your words! And why have you taken so little pie? Take some more."

"Yes, I will have some; just this piece. To your health, Alexandr Fedoritch! A lucky journey, and come home quickly and get married! Why do you blush, Sophia Vassilievna?"

"I?—oh, no. I'm so——"

"Ah, young people, young people—he! he! he!"

"In your company one cannot feel one's sorrow, Anton Ivanitch," said Anna Pavlovna, "you know so well how to comfort one. God give you health! But do take a little liqueur."

"I will drink a little, ma'am, I will indeed; who would not drink at such a leave-taking!"

The breakfast came to an end. The coachman had long ago packed the carriage. They brought it round to the steps. The servants ran about one after another. One carried a trunk, another a bundle, a third a little bag, and then ran back after something else. Like flies round a drop of syrup, the servants clustered round the carriage, and every one wanted to have a hand in it.

"Better lay the trunk so," said one, "and here the hamper with the provisions."

"And where are they to put their legs then?" answered the other, "the trunk's better lengthways, and the hamper we can fix alongside."

"The feather bed will roll off, if the trunk goes lengthways; better across. What next? Were the slippers packed?"

"I don't know. Who packed them?"

"I didn't. Go and see whether they are still there upstairs."

"You go yourself."

"And why not you? I haven't time!"

"Here, don't forget this," screamed a girl, holding up a small parcel above her head.

"Give it here!"

"Stuff this in somehow into the trunk, it's been forgotten to the last," said another, jumping on the steps and handing in a brush and comb.

"Where can one stuff it now?" cried the stout valet angrily to her. "Get away with you, you see the trunk is at the very bottom."

"It's the mistress's orders; doesn't matter a straw to me!"

"Well, give it here, look sharp; we can put it here in the pocket at the side."

The shaft horse continually lifted and shook his head. The bell every time gave a shrill tinkle, reminding one of partings, but the trace horses stood thoughtfully, their heads lowered, as though they understood all the charms of the journey which lay before them, and sometimes lashed their tails or thrust out an underlip at the shaft horse. At last the fatal minute came. There was another little prayer offered up.

"Be seated, be seated, all of you!" was Anton Ivanitch's order. "Pray sit down, Alexandr Fedoritch; and you, Yevsay, sit down. Sit down, sit down!" And he himself just sat for a second on the edge of a chair. "Now let us go, in God's name."

At this point Anna Pavlovna broke down and fell upon Alexandr's neck.

"Farewell, farewell, my dear," was heard among her sobs. "Shall I see you again?" Nothing more could be distinguished. At this moment the tinkle of another troïka-bell was heard; a telega flew into the court, drawn by three horses. From the telega leaped out a young man, covered with dust, who rushed into the room and threw himself on Alexandr's neck.

"Pospyeloff!"—"Adouev!" they exclaimed, at the same instant clasping each other in an embrace.

"From where—how—have you come?"

"From home. I have been galloping day and night, on purpose to say good-bye to you."

"Friend, friend! true friend!" said Adouev with tears in his eyes. "To journey 150 miles to say good-bye! Oh, there is friendship in the world! For life, isn't it?" said Alexandr, passionately clasping his friend's hand and falling into his arms.

"Till death," he replied, pressing his hand still more warmly as he returned his embrace.

"Write to me!"

"Yes, and you too write."

Anna Pavlovna did not know how to make enough of Pospyeloff. The departure was delayed for half an hour. At last they were ready.

All went on foot as far as the wood. Sophia and Alexandr seized their chance, while passing through a dark passage, to throw themselves in each other's arms.

"Sasha, dear Sasha!" "Sonitchka!" they stammered, and their words were lost in a kiss.

"You will forget me there?" she said tearfully.

"Oh, how little you know me! I shall come back; believe me, and never another. . . ."

"Here take this quickly; it is my hair and a ring."

He quickly put both in his pocket.

First walked Anna Pavlovna with her son and Pospyeloff, then Maria Karpovna and her daughter, and lastly the priest and Anton Ivanitch. At some distance followed the carriage. The coachman could scarcely hold in the horses. All the servants surrounded Yevsay at the gates.

"Good-bye, Yevsay Ivanitch; good-bye, old boy, don't forget us!" was heard on all sides.

"Good-bye, brothers, good-bye, don't remember ill against me."

"Good-bye, Yevsushka, good-bye, my darling," said his mother, hugging him. "Here is a holy image for you; it is my blessing. Remember the faith, Yevsay. Don't give way to drink or thieving; serve the master faithfully and well. Good-bye, good-bye!"

She hid her face in her apron and went away.

"Good-bye, mother," said Yevsay lazily.

A little girl of twelve rushed up to him.

"Say good-bye to your little sister!" said an old woman.

"And where have you come from?" said Yevsay, kissing her, "well, good-bye, good-bye! Run home now to the hut, bare-legs."

Agrafena stood last of all, apart from the others. Her face was livid.

"Good-bye, Agrafena Ivanovna!" said Yevsay, slowly, raising his voice and holding out his hand to her.

She let him embrace her, but did not respond to his embrace, only her face worked.

"Here's something for you!" she said, taking a little bag of something from under her apron and thrusting it upon him. "Well of course you will walk out with the Petersburg girls, there!" she said, with a side-long glance at him. And in that glance was apparent all her suffering and her jealousy.

"I walk out, I?" began Yevsay. "God blast me, strike me blind, may I sink into the earth, if I do any such thing there."

"All right, all right!" muttered Agrafena, incredulously, "but inside you—ugh!"

"Ah, I'd almost forgotten!" said Yevsay, taking from his pocket a greasy pack of cards. "For a keepsake, Agrafena Ivanovna, to you; you know you could not get any here."

She stretched out her hand.

"Give it to me, Yevsay Ivanitch!" screamed Proshka out of the crowd.

"You! I'll be damned before I give it to you," and he put the cards into his pocket.

"But give them to me, stupid!" said Agrafena.

"No, Agrafena Ivanovna, you may do as you like, but I won't give you them; you would play with him. Good-bye!"

Without looking round he waved his hand and slowly moved off to the carriage which he looked as if he could have carried off on his shoulders—Alexandr, coachman and horses and all.

"Cursed fellow!" said Agrafena, looking after him and wiping away her falling tears with a corner of her apron.

At the forest a halt was made. While Anna Pavlovna was sobbing and saying good-by to her son, Anton Ivanitch patted one of the horses on the neck, then took him by the nose and shook him backwards and forwards, with which the horse seemed rather displeased, snorting and showing his teeth.

"Tighten the girth on the off-horse," said he to the coachman, "you see the pad is on one side."

The coachman looked at the pad and seeing that it was in its place did not get off the box but only straightened the breach a little with his whip.

"Well, it's time to start, God be with you!" said Anton Ivanitch. "Leave off tormenting yourself, Anna Pavlovna! And you take your seat, Alexandr Fedoritch; you must reach Shishkov in daylight. Farewell, farewell! God give you happiness, rank, honours, all things good and happy, every kind of wealth and blessing! Now, in God's name, whip up the horses, but see you drive quietly along the slope!" he added turning to the coachman.

Alexandr took his seat in the carriage dissolved in tears, but Yevsay went up to his mistress, knelt down at her feet and kissed her hand. She gave him a five-rouble note.

"See, Yevsay, remember, be a good servant and I will marry you to Agrafena, but if not—" She could say no more. Yevsay got on to the box. The coachman wearied with the long delay, seemed to revive; he grasped his hat, set it straight on his head and took the reins; the horses set off at first at a slight trot. He whipped the trace horses in turn one after the other, with a bound they began to draw and the troika flew along the road to the forest. The crowd of escorting friends stood silent and motionless till the carriage had passed altogether out of sight.

Anton Ivanitch was the first to recover himself.

"Well, now we must go home," he said.

Alexandr looked back from the carriage as long as anything was to be seen, then fell with his face hidden in the cushions.

"Do not leave me in my trouble, Anton Ivanitch," said Anna Pavlovna; "dine here."

"Very good, ma'am, I am ready; if you like I will sup here too."

"Yes, and you might stay the night as well."

"How can that be? the funeral is to-morrow."

"Ah yes; well, I must not keep you. Remember me to Fedosia Petrovna; tell her that I grieve from my heart for her affliction, and I should have visited her myself, but God has sent, tell her, sorrow upon me—I have just parted with my son."

"I will tell her, I will tell her, I will not forget."

"Ah, Sashenka, my darling!" she murmured looking round. "There is nothing to be seen of him, he is gone."

Madame Adouev sat the whole day silent, and ate no dinner or supper. Anton Ivanitch talked and dined and supped to make up for her.

"Where is he now, my darling?" was all she could utter from time to time.

"By now he must be at Nefaeva. No, what am I saying?—he is not yet at Nefaeva, but not far off; there he will drink tea," answered Anton Ivanitch.

"No, he never takes tea at this time."

And so Anna Pavlovna in spirit travelled with him. Afterwards, when according to her calculations he must have reached Petersburg, she divided her time between praying, telling fortunes on cards and talking to Maria Karpovna.

And he?

We shall meet him again at Petersburg.

## CHAPTER II

PIOTR IVANITCH ADOUEV, our hero's uncle, had, like him, been sent to Petersburg when twenty years old by his elder brother, Alexandr's father, and had lived there uninterruptedly for seventeen years. He had not kept up a correspondence with his relatives after his brother's death, and Anna Pavlovna had seen nothing of him since then, as he had sold his small property not far from her estate.

In Petersburg he passed for a wealthy man, and perhaps not without good grounds; he had an appointment under a certain influential personage, a secretary of special commissions, and had ribbons to wear in his buttonhole; he had a fine suite of rooms in a good street, kept three men and as many horses. He was not old, but what is called "a man in the prime of life"—between thirty-five and forty. But he did not care to talk of his age, not from petty vanity, but from a sort of deliberate calculation, as though with an idea of insuring his life on the easiest terms. Any way there was no sign in his manner of concealing his age, of any frivolous pretensions to pleasing the fair sex.

He was a tall, well-made man, with large regular features and a swarthy complexion, a smooth graceful carriage, and dignified but agreeable manners—one of those men who are generally described by the term *bel homme*.

His face, too, showed dignity—that is, the power of controlling himself and not allowing his face to be the reflection of his feelings. He was of the opinion that this was improper both for his own sake, and for other people's, and behaved himself in public accordingly. Yet one could not call his face wooden ; no, it was only tranquil. Sometimes he showed the traces of fatigue—doubtless from overwork. He was known to be both a man of business and a busy man. He always dressed carefully, even stylishly, but only within the limits of good taste ; his linen was unexceptionable ; his hands were plump and white, with long transparent finger-nails.

One morning, when he had just waked up and rung his bell, his man brought him in three letters together with the tea, and informed him further of the arrival of a young gentleman, who called himself Alexandr Fedoritch Adouev, and him—Piotr Ivanitch—uncle, and had promised to call at twelve o'clock. Piotr Ivanitch listened tranquilly after his wont to this piece of news, only pricking up his ears, and raising his eyebrows a little.

“Good, you can go,” he said to the servant.

Then he took one letter, and was about to break it open, when he paused and reflected.

—“A nephew from the country—what a surprise!” he muttered ; “and I had hoped they had forgotten me in those regions. Well, why should I trouble myself about him? I will get rid of him.”

He rang again.

—“Tell that gentleman when he comes, that I set off directly I was up for my works, and shall be back in three months.”

“Yes, sir,” said the servant, “and what shall I do with the presents?”

“With what presents?”

“A man brought them : the mistress, he says, sent them as presents from the country.”

“Presents?”

“Yes ; a barrel of honey, a bag of dried raspberries.”

Piotr Ivanitch shrugged his shoulders.

"And two pieces of linen, and preserves."

"Very fine linen, I should imagine!"

"Yes, the linen is fine, and the preserves are of sugar."

"Well, you can go, I will see them directly."

He took one letter, broke it open, and took a comprehensive look at the page. It was written in a large round hand like print, without punctuation.

Adouev began to read in an undertone.

"HONOURED SIR,—Having been closely acquainted and friendly with your lamented parents, and having amused you not a little in your childhood and oftentimes eaten bread and salt in your house, therefore I cherish a warm feeling and an ardent hope that you have not forgotten the old man Vassili Tihovitch, as we here remember you and your parents with every kindness and we pray God——"

"What a rigmarole? Who is it from?" said Piotr Ivanitch, looking at the signature. "Vassili Zayeshaloff! Zayeshaloff!—I'll be hanged if I remember it. What does he want from me?"

And he began reading further.

"But my most humble petition and importunity to you—do not refuse it, little father—to you in Petersburg, unlike us in these parts, all of course is known and everything is in your reach. There has been fixed upon me a cursed lawsuit, and here's the seventh year come and gone, and I cannot shake it off my neck. Do you remember the little copse which lies one mile from my property? The court made a mistake in the purchase deeds, and my adversary, Medvyedev, still persists in it; the point, he says, is a got-up one, and this he sticks to through thick and thin. This same Medvyedev is the fellow who always used to be poaching fish from your ponds without permission; your lamented father drove him away and put him to shame, and would have lodged a complaint with the governor for his impudence, but in the kindness of his heart—God rest his soul!—let him off, and he should not have had mercy on such a rogue. Help me, little father, Piotr Ivanitch; the affair is now before the Senate of Appeal, I don't know in what department, or under whom; but to be sure they will

tell you directly. Go and see the secretary and the senators ; incline them in my favour, tell them it's all a mistake, simply from a mistake in the purchase-deed that I am suffering ; for you they will do everything. While you are there, by the way, kindly trouble to obtain for me a patent of promotion and send it me. Further, little father, Piotr Ivanitch, there is a little matter of the utmost importance : give your heart-felt sympathy to an innocently oppressed victim, and aid with advice and assistance. We have in the governor's service a councillor, Droshoff, a heart of gold more than a man ; he would die before he would betray a friend ; in the town I have no lodging but his house. As soon as I arrive I go straight to him, I live there for weeks, and God forbid you should not make yourself at home ; he will overwhelm you with good things to eat and drink, and cards from dinner till the middle of the night. And such a man has been passed over, without promotion, and now they are forcing him to send in his resignation. Go and see, my dear father, all the grandees there, and suggest to them what a man Afanasy Ivanitch is ; if there is work to be done it goes like a house on fire in his hands ; tell them he has been falsely denounced by an intrigue of the governor's secretary—they will listen to you, and write me by return of post. And go and see my old colleague Kostyakoff. I have heard from one of your Petersburgers who has arrived here, Studentsin—no doubt you know him—that he is living at Peska ; there the street boys will tell you the house ; write by the same post, don't be lazy, whether he is alive or dead, whether he is in good health, what he is doing, whether he remembers me. Get acquainted and make friends with him—he is a capital fellow—an open heart, and such an amusing fellow. I conclude my letter with a further request——”

Adouev ceased reading, slowly tore the letter into four pieces and threw it under the table into a basket, and then stretched and yawned.

He took the other letter and began to read it also in an undertone.

“ DEAREST BROTHER, GRACIOUS SIR, PIOTR IVANITCH.”

“ What—a sister ! ” said Adouev, looking at the signature : “ Maria Gorbatov. ” He looked up at the ceiling, trying to

recollect something. "How is it?—some recollection—there, that's good—my brother was married to a Gorbato<sup>v</sup>; this is her sister, this is—ah! I remember!"

He frowned and began to read.

"Though fate has severed us, perhaps, for ever, and an abyss lies between us; years have rolled by—"

He skipped a few lines and began further on:

"To the day of my death I shall remember that walk together near our lake, when you, at risk of your life and health, went knee-deep into the water and picked for me some great yellow flowers among the rushes, and how a kind of juice ran out of the stems and stained our hands and you fetched water in your cap for us to wash them; we laughed so much at it then. Ah, how happy I was that day! That flower I have still pressed in a book."

Adouev stopped. It was clear that this circumstance was not very gratifying to him; he shook his head rather suspiciously.

"But have you still kept the ribbons [he continued reading] that you snatched out of my drawer, in spite of my entreaties?"

"I snatched out a ribbon!" he said aloud, frowning angrily. He skipped a few more lines in silence and read:

"But I was destined for the unwedded state, and have always been happy in it: there is no one to hinder my recalling those happy days."

"Ah, the old maid!" thought Piotr Ivanitch. "Isn't it astonishing she should still have yellow flowers in her mind? What more is there?"

"Are you married, dearest brother, and to whom? Who is that dear unknown friend, who smoothes the path of your existence? tell me her name. I will love her like my own sister, and in my dreams her image will be joined with yours, and I will remember her in my prayers. But if you are not married, now what is the reason—write me frankly; no one will tear your secrets from me, I shall bury them in my bosom, and they shall be torn from me only together with my heart. Do not delay; I am burning with eagerness to read your words, so incomprehensible—"

"No, it's your words that are so incomprehensible!" thought Piotr Ivanitch.

"I did not know [he read] that our dear Sashenka had suddenly decided to visit the splendid metropolis—happy boy! he will see the magnificent houses and shops, will enjoy the luxuries of town, and will press his adored uncle to his bosom; but I—I—meanwhile shall be shedding tears over the memory of my own happy days. If I had known of his departure, I should have worked day and night and have embroidered a cushion for you: a negress with two dogs. You would not believe how often I have wept looking at that pattern; what is more sacred than friendship and fidelity? Now I am possessed by one only thought; I shall devote my days to it; but I have no wool here good enough, and so I am venturing to beg you, dearest brother, to send me some like this pattern which I have enclosed, of the very best English wool as soon as possible from the first shop. But what am I saying? what an awful thought arrests my pen! perhaps you have already forgotten me, and how should you remember the poor sufferer, who can but weep secluded from the world? But no! I cannot think that you are a monster, like all men; no! my heart speaks and tells me that you have kept your old sentiment towards me—towards all—in the midst of all the pomps and pleasures of the great metropolis. This thought is a balm for my suffering heart. Forgive me, I cannot write more, my hand trembles.

"I remain till death yours,

"MARIA GORBATOV."

"P.S.—Have you, brother, any good books by you? Send me some if you have any to spare; on every page I should remember you and weep, or get me some new from a shop, if they are not dear. They say the works of Mr. Zagoskin and of Mr. Marlinsky are very good—let it be those; and I have seen in the papers the title—'Of Prejudices' by Poozin—send me that—I can't endure prejudices."

Having read it through, Adouev was just going to get rid of the letter, but he stopped short.

"No," he thought, "I will keep it; there are people who make a speciality of such letters; some of them have whole collections—perhaps some one would be glad to have it."

He threw the letter into the beaded basket, which hung on the wall, then took up the third letter and began to read it :

"DEAR BROTHER-IN-LAW, PIOTR IVANITCH.—Do you remember how seventeen years ago we were preparing for your departure from us? Now it has pleased God to send my own son on the same long journey. You will be delighted with him; he will remind you of our dear lamented Fedor Ivanitch. Sashenka is his father over again. God alone knows what my mother's heart has suffered in letting him go away to strange parts. I send him, my dear brother-in-law, straight to you; I was not willing he should lodge anywhere except with you——"

Adouev again shook his head.

"Silly old woman!" he muttered and read on : "He might, in his inexperience, I daresay, have put up at the inn, but I knew that his uncle might feel hurt by that, and I bade him go straight to you. How delighted you will be when you see him! Don't let him want for advice, brother-in-law, and take him under your wing; I give him into your hands."

Piotr Ivanitch paused again.

"Of course you are all he has [he went on reading]. Look after him, don't spoil him too much, and don't be too severe with him; he is sure to get severity from some one, and strangers will be hard upon him, but he has no one to pet him, except his kinsman; and he is such an affectionate boy: you have only to see him and then you will not part with him. And tell the chief, in whose office he will be, to take care of my Sashenka and to treat him tenderly before all things; he has been tenderly cared for with me. Keep him from wine and cards. At night—you will no doubt sleep in the same room—Sashenka has a way of lying on his back; from this he is apt, dear heart, to toss and groan in his sleep; you must rouse him gently and turn him over, he will go off again at once; but in summer cover his mouth with a handkerchief, he is apt to sleep with it open and the tiresome flies are so troublesome in the morning; and don't let him want, either, in the matter of money."

Adouev frowned, but his face quickly brightened again, when he read further.

"But I am sending what is needful, and I have just put into his hands a thousand roubles, only don't let him waste it on trifles, and don't let sharpers get hold of him, to be sure one hears there are so many rascals and unscrupulous creatures of every sort in your metropolis. And, in conclusion, excuse all shortcomings, dear brother-in-law—I have quite got out of the habit of letter-writing.

"I remain,

"Your respectful and affectionate sister-in-law,

"A. ADOUEV."

"P.S.—I send with this some presents from the country—some raspberries from our garden, some white honey, as clear as teardrops, some linen for two dozen shirts and some household preserves. Eat and wear them, and may they do you good, and when they are done, I will send more. And keep an eye over Yevsay : he is a quiet fellow and sober, but I daresay in time he will be spoiled, if he is you must let him have a whipping."

Piotr Ivanitch laid the letter deliberately on the table, still more deliberately took up a cigar, and after rolling it in his hands, began to smoke. He deliberated a long while on the trick, as he mentally called it, which his sister-in-law was playing upon him. He began to analyse closely what they were doing with him and what he ought to do himself.

He resolved the whole incident into the following propositions. His nephew he knew nothing of, and consequently cared nothing about, and therefore his heart imposed on him no obligations of any kind to him ; the matter must be judged simply by the light of reason and common justice. His brother had married, he had entered upon married life for his own pleasure—why should he, Piotr Ivanitch, be burdened with the responsibility of his brother's son, he who had enjoyed none of the advantages of matrimony ? There was obviously no reason.

But a point presented itself on the other side. The mother had packed her son straight off to him, to his protection, not knowing whether he was willing to undertake this responsibility, not even knowing whether he was in a position to do anything for his nephew. Granted this

was absurd ; still if the deed was done and his nephew in Petersburg, without assistance, without acquaintance, without even letters of recommendation, young and quite inexperienced . . . . would he be doing right to leave him uncared for, to throw him on the world without advice and warnings, and if anything should go wrong with him, would he not feel answerable to his conscience ?

At this point Adouey chanced to recall how seventeen years ago, his dead brother and Anna Pavlovna had despatched him to Petersburg. They certainly had not been able to do anything for him in Petersburg, he had made his own way . . . . but he remembered her tears at the leave-taking, her blessing, quite maternal, her fond caresses, her pies, and last of all her parting words : " Ah, when our Sashenka—then a child of three—is grown up, perhaps you, brother, will be good to him." Here Piotr Ivanitch stood up and went with quick steps into the hall.

" Vassili ! " he said, " when my nephew comes, don't send him away. But go and find out whether the apartment above here has been taken, that was to let not long ago, and if it has not been let yet, say that I will retain it for myself. Ah, these are the presents ! Well, what are we to do with them ? "

" The man from our shop saw them just now, as they brought them upstairs ; he inquired if we could let him have the honey. ' I will give you a good price,' said he, ' and the raspberries should he take . . . . ' "

" Good ! give them to him. Well, and where are we to put the linen ? Wouldn't it do for chair covers ? Put away the linen then and put away the jam, we could eat that—it looks good."

Piotr Ivanitch had just settled himself to shave when Alexandr Fedoritch appeared. He was just going to throw himself on his uncle's neck, but the latter, holding his soft youthful hand in his powerful one, kept him at some distance from him, ostensibly to get a good look at him, but apparently more with a view of preventing this demonstration and confining him to shaking hands.

" Your mother writes truly," he said, " you are the living image of my late brother ; I should have known you in the street. But you are better looking. Well I will go on

shaving without ceremony, and you sit here opposite me, so that I can see you, and let us have a talk."

So saying Piotr Ivanitch continued what he was doing as though none were present, and began to soap his cheeks, stretching them with his tongue, first one, and then the other. Alexandr was overwhelmed with confusion at this reception and did not know how to begin the conversation. He attributed his uncle's coolness to the fact that he had not taken up his quarters with him at once.

"Well, how is your mother? Is she quite well? I suppose she begins to feel her age?" asked his uncle, making various grimaces before the glass.

"Mamma is well thank God, Auntie Maria Pavlovna desires to be remembered to you," said Alexandr timidly. "Auntie charged me to embrace you for. . . ." He got up and went up to his uncle, to give him a kiss on the cheek, or the head, or the shoulder, or whatever part of him he could get at.

"It's time your aunt had more sense at her age, but I see she is just as foolish as she was twenty years ago."

Alexandr went back to his seat in bewilderment.

"You received a letter, uncle?" he said.

"Yes, I did."

"Vassili Tihovitch Zayeshaloff," began Alexandr, "earnestly begs you to examine his affair and interest yourself in it."

"Yes, he writes so to me. Such lunatics are not extinct among you yet then?"

Alexandr did not know what to think—he was completely dumbfounded by these remarks.

"Forgive me, uncle," he began at last in trepidation.

"What?"

"Forgive me for not having come straight to you; for having put up at the Diligence Hotel. I did not know your rooms."

"What is there to apologise for? You did very properly. Your good mother—heaven knows what she is thinking of. How could you have come to me without knowing whether I could put you up, or not? Mine are bachelor's quarters, as you can see, for one only; a hall, a drawing-room, a dining-room, a smoking-room and a study, a wardrobe-room and a dressing-room—there isn't a room to spare. I

should have been in your way and you in mine. But I have found a lodging here for you in the house.

"Ah! dear uncle!" said Alexandr, "how can I thank you for this kind service?"

And he leaped up again from his seat with the intention of showing his gratitude both in word and deed.

"Gently, gently, don't touch me!" said his uncle, "the razors are very sharp, I'm afraid of your getting cut, or cutting me."

Alexandr perceived that in spite of all his efforts he would not succeed that day in even once embracing and pressing to his heart his adored uncle and put off this project for a future occasion.

"The room is pretty cheerful," began Pictr Ivanitch; "the look-out from the windows is rather on to walls, but of course you won't want to be always sitting at the window; when you are at home, you are always busy with something and haven't time to be gaping at a window. And it is not dear—forty roubles a month. There is an ante-room for your man. You must accustom yourself from the very beginning to live alone, without a nurse; to conduct your own little household, I mean to board at home, in a word to have a corner of your own—*un chez soi*, as the French say. There you will be able to entertain whom you please. However, when I dine at home, you are welcome, but on other days—young men here generally dine at an eating-house—but I advise you to send out for your dinner; at home you will be quieter and you won't be exposed to mixing with God knows who. Eh?"

"I am very grateful, uncle."

"What is there to be grateful for? Aren't you a relation? I am only fulfilling my duty. Well, I will leave you now, I am going out, I have my official work and also a factory."

"I didn't know you had a factory, uncle."

"Yes, glass and porcelain works; but I am not the sole proprietor, there are three of us partners."

"Is business good?"

"Yes, fairly so; our sales are chiefly at the markets in the inland provinces. The last few years have been far from bad! If we have five years more like this, well and good. One partner to be sure is not very trustworthy—he does nothing but spend money, but I know how to keep

him in check. Well, good-bye for the present. You go now and take a look at the town, stroll about, and dine somewhere, but come and have tea with me in the evening. I shall be at home, then we can talk a little. Here! Vassili, you show the room and help to get it ready."

"So this is how it is here, in Petersburg," thought Alexandr, sitting down in his new dwelling. "If my own uncle is like this, what will others be?"

Young Adouev paced up and down his room deep in thought, but Yevsay talked to himself as he set the room to rights.

"It's a queer way of living here," he muttered, in Piotr Ivanitch's kitchen. "I hear there's a baking once a month, the servants have their meals out. Ugh! my word, what people! A pretty thing, and they call themselves Petersburgers! Among us every dog has his own saucer to lap out of."

Alexandr seemed to share Yevsay's opinion though he was silent. He went up to the window and looked out upon a view of water-pipes, roofs, and brick walls of houses, black and filthy, and he compared it with what he had seen, just a fortnight before, from the window of his home in the country. His heart sank.

He went out into the street; all was confusion, every one running in different directions, occupied only with his own affairs, scarcely glancing at those who passed. He remembered the little town which was the capital of his province, where a meeting with any one, whoever it might be, was always interesting in one way or another. Here Ivan Ivanitch would be going to see Piotr Piotrovitch—and every one in the town knows the reason why. Here is Maria Martinova coming home from vespers, and there Afanasy Savitch going out to fish. There a gendarme from the governor's would gallop past like mad for the doctor, and every one knew that Her Excellency's confinement was expected, though in the judgment of the various gossips and old women it was not proper to be aware of this fact too soon. Every one would be asking "boy or girl?" and the ladies were all making caps worthy to celebrate the occasion. Here Matvai Matvyitch would come out of his house with his thick stick, at six o'clock in the evening, and every one knew that he was going to take his evening constitutional, without which

his digestion would suffer; and that he would infallibly stop at the window of the old councillor, who, they also knew, would be drinking his tea at this hour. If you met any one —no matter who—there would be a bow and a word or two, and even if there is any one you don't salute, at least you know who he is, and where he is going and why, and in his face is written: I too know who you are and where you are going and why. And if it should ever happen that two people meet who don't know each other, directly they see one another, the faces of both assume an expression of inquiry; they stand still and look round twice, and when they get home they describe the dress and appearance of the unknown personage, and conjectures and discussions will follow as to who he is and where he comes from, and what is his object. But here with scarcely a glance they push along the way as though they were all enemies.

To begin with, Alexandr gazed with provincial curiosity at every one he met, and every respectably dressed man he took for either a minister, or an ambassador, or an author, "isn't he," he thought, "and isn't that one?" But soon he was weary of this—ministers, ambassadors, authors met him at every step.

He looked at the houses and grew still more gloomy, he was depressed by the monotonous piles of stone, which stretch like colossal tombstones one after another in one unbroken mass. Here the street will end, and there will be open space to rest my eyes—he thought—or a hill or greenness, or a broken-down wall. No, there the stone ramparts begin again of houses all identical, with four rows of windows. And that street ended, again there was something to shut one in, another row of the same houses. You look to the right, to the left—on all sides hemming you in like ranks of giants, houses, houses and houses, stone and stone, all the same and the same again; no freedom, no outlet for the eyes; cramped in on all sides. It seemed as though men's thoughts and feelings too must be cramped by it.

The first impressions of a provincial in Petersburg are disagreeable. It is all strange and depressing to him; no one notices him; he feels lost here; even the novelty, the variety of the crowds fail to please him. His provincial egoism is up in arms against everything he sees here, and

has not seen at home. He grows meditative and is carried back in thought to his own town. What a soothing vision! A house standing alone with sharp-pointed wall and a small avenue of acacias. Against the wall a kind of shed, a pigeon-house—the merchant Izumin is a devoted pigeon fancier; this was his reason for taking the house and building the pigeon-house against the wall; and every morning and evening he stands under the wall in his nightcap and dressing-gown, a stick in his hand with a rag tied to the end of it, and whistles and waves the stick in the air. The house is exactly like a lighthouse: on all four sides it is all windows flush with the walls, a house of ancient construction; it seems as though it were always going to fall down. Next it, is the small gray house of the surgeon spread out in semicircle with two wings like sentry-boxes, and all hidden away in the green foliage; the next house has turned its back on the street, the next is shut in by a mile of fence, from behind which rosy-cheeked apples peep from the trees and tempt the schoolboys. The houses all stand back from the church at a respectful distance, and all round it the fresh grass is springing up, between the tombstones. The Government offices are such that there is no mistake about their being Government offices; no one dare come near them except on business. But here in the capital you cannot distinguish them from private houses, and what's more, shameful to say, they even have shops in the same building. And there in the provincial town you need only walk through two or three streets and you feel the fresh air of the country and the hedges begin and the market-gardens and then open fields of spring corn. And the peace, the unchanging monotony—even in the street and in the people you find this same blessed stagnation! And all live unconfin'd, with space to move in; no one is cooped up; even the cocks and hens can run about in the streets, while the goats and cows nip the grass and the children are flying kites.

It is even more painful for the provincial when he comes to one of those houses with a letter of introduction. He imagines that they will receive him with open arms, that they will make much of him, give him the most comfortable chair, and the best of everything; that they will skilfully sound him as to his favourite dishes; how he will be em-

barrassed by their warmth, and how finally he will throw aside all ceremony and embrace his host and hostess, will call them "thou," as though they had been friends for twenty years ; how all would drink together, perhaps sing songs in chorus. . . .

When he is there ! they hardly look at him, and frowning, excuse themselves on the plea of engagement ; if they have a business, then it begins at a fixed hour, and then they do not dine or sup, and of taking "nips" they know nothing—not even vodka and biscuits. The host retreats from his embrace and looks in a strange way at his guest. In the next room he hears the clatter of knives and forks ; they should invite him in there, but they try to avoid his skilful hints. . . . Everywhere there are closed doors, everywhere bells ; isn't it pitiful ? and such cold inhospitable faces. But away at home one may venture to walk in ; if they have finished dinner, why they will dine again with their guest ; the samovar is on the table from morning till night, and there are no bells even in the shops. They embrace, they kiss every one who comes. A neighbour there is really a neighbour, they live hand in hand, and heart in heart ; a kinsman is so much a kinsman ; he would die for one of his own people—ah ! it is depressing !

Alexandr went as far as the Admiralty Square, and stood there quite overwhelmed. He stopped in rapt enthusiasm before the statue of Peter the Great. He gazed at the Neva and the buildings surrounding it, and his eyes sparkled. He felt suddenly ashamed of his preference for shaky bridges, little gardens and tumble-down fences. He grew happy and lighthearted. Even the bustle and the crowd all took a different significance in his eyes. His aspirations, which had been overclouded for a time by painful impressions, grew bright again ; a new life seemed to open its arms to him, and tempted him to the unknown. His heart beat violently. He dreamt of noble effort, of lofty aspirations and stepped proudly along the Nevsky Prospect, considering himself a citizen of a new world. . . . Full of such dreams, he returned home.

In the evening at eleven o'clock, his uncle sent up to summon him to tea.

"I am only just home from the theatre," said his uncle, lying down on the sofa.

"What a pity you did not tell me sooner, uncle, I would have gone with you."

"I was in the stalls. Where would you have been, sitting on my knee?" said Piotr Ivanitch. "Go by yourself to-morrow."

"It's so depressing to be alone in a crowd, uncle, to have no one to share your impressions with."

"And why should you? You will have to learn to think, and to feel, in fact to live alone ; it is necessary now. But you ought to be suitably dressed before you go to the theatre."

Alexandr looked at his clothes and wondered at his uncle's words. "In what way am I unsuitably dressed ?" he thought, "I have a blue coat and blue trousers.

"I have a lot of clothes, uncle," he said, "made by Koenigstein ; he makes for our governor."

"Never mind ; still it will not do ; in a day or two I will send you to my own tailor ; but that's a detail. We have something more important to talk about. Tell me, why did you come here ?"

"I came . . . to live here."

"To live? Well if you understand by that term, to eat, to drink, and to sleep, then it was not worth the trouble of coming so far : you will not be able either to sleep or to eat here as you can there at home ; but if you meant something else please explain yourself."

"To enjoy life, I meant to say," said Alexandr, blushing all over ; "I was tired of the country—it is always the same and . . ."

"Ah ! that's another thing ! What, you want to take a flat in the Nevsky Prospect, set up a carriage, make a large circle of acquaintances and have reception-days ?"

"But would not that cost a great deal ?" remarked Alexandr naively.

"Your mother writes that she has given you a thousand roubles ; that is not much," said Piotr Ivanitch. "An acquaintance of mine came here not long ago, he, too, was tired of the country ; he wanted to enjoy life, so he brought fifty thousand and will receive as much every year. He will certainly enjoy life in Petersburg, but you—no ! you did not come up for that."

"From your words, uncle, it seems to follow that I don't know myself why I came."

"Exactly so; that's well said; that's the truth; only I don't quite approve of it. Did you not, when you prepared to come here, put to yourself the question: why am I going? That would not have been inappropriate."

"Before putting to myself the question, I had the answer ready," replied *Alexandr* with pride.

"Then why did you not tell it? Well, why?"

"I was carried along by an irresistible yearning, by a thirst for noble activity; a longing burned within me to illustrate and to realise . . ."

*Piotr Ivanitch* rose a little from the sofa, took his cigar out of his mouth and pricked up his ears.

"To give effect to the aspirations, which surged——"

"Don't you write verses?" asked *Piotr Ivanitch* suddenly.

"Yes, and prose, too, uncle; shall I fetch some?"

"No, no!—some future time; I only asked."

"And why?"

"Because you talk so. . . ."

"Badly?"

"No—perhaps very well, only strangely."

"Our professor of æsthetics talked like that, and he was considered the most eloquent of the professors," said *Alexandr* in confusion.

"What did he talk about in that way?"

"About his subject."

"Ah!"

"How am I to talk then, uncle?"

"Rather more simply, like everyone else, and not like a lecturer on æsthetics. However, it is impossible for you to change all of a sudden; later on you will see for yourself. You mean to say, it appears, so far as I can recall your University jargon and translate your words, that you came here to make a career and a fortune. . . . Isn't it so?"

"Yes, uncle, a career."

"And fortune?" added *Piotr Ivanitch*; "what is a career without a fortune? The idea is very fine; only—it was a mistake for you to come."

"Why so? I hardly think you say that from your own experience?" said *Alexandr* looking around him.

"That's neatly said. Certainly I am well off and my

business is pretty fair. But I only consider—you and I—there's a great difference."

"I never ventured to compare myself with you."

"That's not the point, you are perhaps ten times as wise and good as I . . . but your nature, I fancy, is not capable of adapting itself to a new standard, and your standard at home—oh, oh ! You have been petted and spoiled by your mother; how are you to put up with what I put up with? You are bound to be a dreamer, and a dreamer is nowhere at all here ; people like us come here to work."

"Perhaps I am fit for work of some sort, if you will give me the benefit of your advice and experience."

"Advise you—I am afraid to do it. I could not answer for your countryman's nature ; things would go wrong, and you would reproach me ; but as for telling you my opinions —well—I will not refuse, you may listen or not as you please. But no ! I don't expect success. You have your own way of looking at life in the country ; how are you to work it in ? You country-people are mad over love and friendship and the delights of life and happiness ; you imagine that life consists only of this : oh and oh ! you weep and sob and make love and do no work . . . how am I to break you of all that ? . . . It's a difficult task."

"I will try, uncle, to adapt myself to the ideas of the time. Already to-day while gazing at the immense edifices, and the ships that bring us gifts from far-away lands, I thought of the achievements of humanity in this age, I grasped the significance of this multitude moving in brain-directed activity, and was ready to flow with it."

Piotr Ivanitch during this monologue contracted his brows expressively and looked steadily at his nephew. The latter stopped.

"The fact is simple enough, I fancy," said his uncle; "but these country-people—goodness knows what ideas they take into their heads . . . brain-directed activity indeed ! Certainly you had done better to remain in the country. You would have had a splendid life there : you would have been the cleverest of all of them, and have been looked on as a poet and an eloquent talker, you would have believed in eternal and unchanging love and friendship, in the family and in happiness, you would have married and have reached old age without noticing it, and you would have been in

reality happy after your own fashion ; but you will not be happy after our fashion ; here all these ideas must be turned upside down."

"How, uncle, are love and friendship—these sacred and lofty emotions, not the same here as at home?"

"We have love and friendship here of course—they are cheap enough to be plentiful everywhere ; only it is not the same as those in your home ; in time you will see for yourself. . . . But before everything you must forget these *sacred* and *heavenly* emotions and look at facts more simply as they are, indeed it would be better, then you will talk more simply too. However, it is not my business. You have come here and will not go back. If you don't find what you looked for, you have only yourself to blame. I will advise you what is good in my opinion and what is bad, and then do as you please. We will try—perhaps—something may be made of you. Ah! your mother asked me to provide you with money. . . . You understand what I say to you ; don't come to me for money ; that always destroys a good understanding between honourable people. However, don't imagine that I have declined to help you ; no, if it should come to there being no other resource, then there is no help for it, come to me. Any way, it is better to borrow from an uncle than from a stranger, especially as you would get it without interest. But you ought not to let yourself be driven to this extremity, I will quickly find you a place so that you can earn some money. Well, good-bye for the present. Come in again in the morning, we will talk of what and how to begin."

Alexandr Fedovitch was going to his room.

"Oh, don't you want some supper?" Piotr Ivanitch called after him.

"Yes, uncle—I should—perhaps."

"I have nothing to offer you."

Alexandr was silent. "Why this useless proposal then?" he thought.

"I don't have my meals prepared at home, and the shops are closed by now," continued his uncle. "Here is a lesson for you at the very first turn—accustom yourself to it. At home you go to bed and get up with the sun, eat and drink when nature bid you ; if it is cold, you put on a cap with lappets and no one wants to know anything about it ; when

it is light, it is day, when it is dark, it is night. At your home all are asleep, but I am still sitting at work; at the end of the month one has to balance one's accounts. You breathe the fresh air there all the year round, but here even that enjoyment costs money, and the same with everything. It's a complete antipodes! Here they do not even eat supper, especially at their own cost, or at mine either. This, perhaps, will be an advantage to you; you will not toss and groan at night, and I haven't the time to turn you over!"

"That one can easily get accustomed to, uncle."

"Good, if it is so. But with you everything is still in the old style; you can still I suppose arrive at a friend's at midnight; and they will begin to get supper ready for you directly."

"Why, uncle, I should think you could not find fault with that in us. The kindheartedness of Russians—"

✓ "Stop! what sort of kindheartedness is there in it? You are so bored that you are glad of any creature who turns up:—you are welcome, eat as much as you like, only employ our idleness in some way, help us to kill time, and let us look at you; any way it is something new; and we don't grudge you your entertainment; it costs us nothing here. A poor sort of kindheartedness!"

So Alexandr went to bed and tried to conjecture what sort of a man his uncle was. He remembered the whole conversation; much of it he did not understand, and the rest he did not altogether believe.

"I don't talk properly!" he thought: "love and friendship are not undying! surely my uncle must be laughing at me? Can this be the way they live here? What was it Sophia liked so specially in me, but the gift of eloquence? But is her love really not undying? . . . And is it possible they really don't have supper here."

He lay tossing uneasily in his bed for a long time: with his head full of disquieting thoughts, and his stomach empty, he could not get to sleep.

Piotr Ivanitch became every day more contented with his nephew.

"He does not intrude," he said to one of his partners at the factory—"never comes to see me without an invitation; and when he notices that he is *de trop*, he goes away

directly ; and he does not ask for money ; he is a well-behaved boy. He has his peculiarities . . . . sidles up to kiss you, and talks in a high-flown style ; well he will get out of that ; and what a good thing it is he does not come to me for everything."

Alexandr considered it his duty to love his uncle, but he could never get used to his character and ways of thinking.

" My uncle seems a good-hearted man," he wrote one morning to Pospyeloff, " very intelligent, only he is utterly prosaic, for ever absorbed in business, in calculations. His soul seems chained to earth and is never lifted up into the pure ether far remote from earthly sordidness, and we shall never, I fancy, be altogether one in heart. When I came here, I imagined that as my uncle he would give me a place in his heart, that in the midst of the cold world here he would cherish me with all the warmth of affection and friendship ; and friendship, you know, is a *second providence*. But he is nothing else than this world individualised. I expected to spend my time with him, never to be away from him for a minute, but what was my welcome ?—cold advice, which he calls common sense ; but I would rather it were not common sense but full of warm, heartfelt interest. He is not exactly proud, but he is averse to all sincere outbursts of feeling. We do not dine nor sup together, and go out nowhere together. On my arrival he never told me how he was or what he was doing and he never tells me even where he is going and why, who are his acquaintances. what are his likes and dislikes and how he spends his time. He is never specially angry, nor affectionate, nor sad, nor cheerful. His heart is a stranger to all transport of love and friendship, all yearnings after the sublime. . . . He does not believe in love, &c., says that there is no such thing as happiness, that nobody has guaranteed it to us, and that life is a simple matter, which is divided equally into good and bad, into pleasure, success, health and ease, and then into pain, failure, anxiety, disease and so on ; that we ought to look at all this simply, and not to fill our heads with useless matters. And what do you suppose *are* useless matters ? Why the problems of why we were created and to what we are striving—that that is not our business and that it hinders us from seeing what is before our noses and from minding

our business. He is always talking about business ! One sees no difference in him whether he is absorbed in some enjoyment or in prosaic business at his accounts, and at the theatre he is exactly the same ; he receives no powerful impression from anything and I think does not care for art ; it is foreign to his nature ; I fancy he has not even read Pushkin."

Piotr Ivanitch unexpectedly appeared in his nephew's apartment and came upon him writing a letter.

"I came to see how you were settled in here," said his uncle, "and to talk a little of business."

Alexandr jumped up, and quickly covered something with his hand.

"Hide it, hide your secret," said Piotr Ivanitch ; "I will turn my back. Well, have you put it away ? But what is it has fallen out ? What is this ?"

"That—uncle—oh ! nothing," Alexandr was beginning, but he grew confused and stopped speaking.

"A lock of hair it looks like ! Is it really nothing ? Come, I have seen one, so show me the other thing you are hiding in your hand."

Alexandr, like a schoolboy caught, unwillingly opened his hand and showed a ring.

"What is this ? Where did you get it ?" asked Piotr Ivanitch.

"These, uncle, are the material tokens of immaterial relations."

"What—what ? Pass me these tokens."

"They are the pledges. . . . ."

"I suppose you brought them from the country ?"

"From Sophia, uncle, a keepsake at parting."

"So that is what it is. And you brought this 1500 miles with you ?"

The uncle shook his head.

"You would have done better to bring a bag of dried raspberries, that at least you could have sold at a shop, but these pledges . . . ."

He looked, first at the lock of hair then at the ring. He sniffed at the hair contemptuously, but the ring he weighed in his hand. Then he took a sheet of paper from the table, wrapped both the tokens up in it, screwed it all into a compact pellet, and threw it out of window.

"Uncle!" screamed Alexandr furiously, seizing his hand but too late; the pellet flew into the corner of the opposite wall, fell towards the canal on the edge of a barge of bricks, jumped off, and leaped into the water.

Alexandr gazed in silence with an expression of bitter reproach at his uncle.

"Uncle!" he repeated.

"What is it?"

"How am I to describe your action?"

"As a throwing out of the window into the canal of some immaterial tokens and various odds and ends of rubbish which there was no need to keep in the room."

"Rubbish—*that* rubbish?"

"Why, what do you regard it as, a piece of your heart? I came to him about business, and what do I find him busy over, he is sitting thinking about some stuff and nonsense!"

"Does that interfere with business, uncle?"

"Very much so. Time is slipping away, and you have not so far talked to me of your plans; whether you do want a government clerkship or have you adopted some other occupation? You haven't said a word to me, and this is all because you have Sophia and her keepsake in your head. There, I do believe you are just writing a letter to her, aren't you now?"

"Yes, I was just beginning."

"But have you written to your mother?"

"Not yet, I meant to to-morrow."

"Why to-morrow? To your mother to-morrow, but to Sophia, whom you must forget within a month, to-day."

"Sophia! can I ever forget her?"

"You will have to. If I had not thrown away your keepsakes what would you have gained, pray? You would have remembered her a month longer for nothing. I did you a double service. In a few years these keepsakes would have reminded you of a folly at which you would blush."

"Blush at such a pure, such a sacred remembrance? That shows you do not recognise the poetry."

"What poetry is there in what is foolish? Is there poetry for instance in your aunt's letter? Yellow flowers, a lake, some mystery or other. When I was reading it, it

made me feel sick beyond description ! I was almost blushing, and yet I am not exactly in the habit of blushing."

"That's awful—awful, uncle ! It must be that you have never loved."

"I could never bear keepsakes."

"It is a sort of wooden life !" said Alexandr, with great feeling. "It is vegetating, not living ! Love—sacred passion !"

"I know the sacred love you talk about ; at your age, you need only see a curl, a slipper, a garter, or touch a hand . . . through your whole body you feel a thrill of sacred, sublime love, but let it have its way—and it's a different matter. . . . Love is before you, more's the pity ; you can't run away from it that's certain ; but serious business will run away from you, if you don't devote yourself to it ?"

"But is not love a serious business ?"

"No ; it is an agreeable distraction, only you must not give yourself up to it too much, or some harm will come of it. That's why I am afraid for you." His uncle shook his head.

"I have almost found you a position ; you really do want to get into an office ?" he said.

Alexandr rushed up and kissed his uncle on the cheek.

"He has succeeded at last !" said his uncle, rubbing his cheek. "Why wasn't I on the look-out for it ? Well, now listen. Tell me, what do you know, what do you feel yourself fit for ?"

"I know theology, civil, criminal, and international law, and jurisprudence, diplomacy, political economy, philosophy, æsthetics and archæology."

"Stop, stop ! but you know how to write Russian correctly ? At the present moment that is more necessary than all."

"What a question, uncle ; do I know how to write Russian !" said Alexandr, running to his bureau, and beginning to take from it various papers, but his uncle meantime picked up a letter from the table and began to read it.

Alexandr returned with his papers to the table, and saw

that his uncle was reading his letter. His papers fell out of his hand.

"What is it you are reading, uncle?" he said in dismay.

"Why a letter that was lying here; to a friend, it must be. I beg your pardon—I wanted to see how you write."

"And you have read it?"

"Yes, almost, only two lines more—I shall have done with it directly; why what was in it? there are certainly no secrets in it, or it would not have been lying about like this."

"What can you think of me now?"

"I think that you write fairly, correctly, smoothly."

"Then you cannot have read what is written in it?" Alexandr asked eagerly.

"No, I fancy I have read all," said Piotr Ivanitch, looking at both pages; "to begin with you describe Petersburg and your impressions, and then me."

"Good God!" exclaimed Alexandr, covering his face with his hands.

"Well, what is it? what is the matter?"

"And you say this calmly? you are not angry? you don't hate me?"

"No! what is there to make a fuss about?"

"Repeat it, calm me!"

"No, no, no."

"But to read such bitter truths about yourself—and from whom? from your own nephew!"

"You fancy that you have written the truth?"

"Oh, uncle!—of course, I was mistaken—I will correct—forgive me."

"Would you like me to dictate what is the truth to you?"

"If you would be so good."

"Sit down then and write."

Alexandr picked out a sheet of paper, and took up a pen, while Piotr Ivanitch, looking at the letter he had read, dictated:—"Dear friend—have you got it?"

"Yes."

"Petersburg and my impressions I will not describe to you."

"Describe to you," said Alexandr, writing it down.

"Petersburg has been fully described long ago, and what has not been described you must see for yourself;

my impressions will be of no use whatever to you. It is useless to waste time and paper for nothing. I shall do better to describe my uncle, because that is of interest to me personally."

"To me personally," said Alexandr.

"Well, you write here, that I am good-hearted and very intelligent—I may be so, or may not; let us rather take a middle course, write: My uncle is not stupid nor unkind, he wishes me well."

"Uncle! I know how to appreciate and to feel" . . . . said Alexander, and got up to kiss him.

"Although he does not fall upon my neck," continued Piotr Ivanitch. Alexandr, who had not yet reached him, sat down again rather suddenly.

"But he wishes me well, because he has no reason or motive to wish me ill, and because my mother has interceded with him on my behalf, and she was good to him formerly. He says he does not love me—and very reasonably; it is impossible to love any one in a fortnight, and I do not love him yet, even though I maintain that I do."

"How is that possible?" said Alexandr.

"Write, write. 'But we are beginning to get used to one another. He even says that it is possible to do without love altogether. He does not sit with his arms round me, from morning till evening, because this is quite unnecessary, and he has not the time. 'Averse to all outbursts of feeling'—that may stand: that is good. Have you written it?"

"Yes."

"Well, what have you next? 'Prosaic'—write it."

While Alexandr was writing, Piotr Ivanitch took from the table a paper of some sort, twisted it up, thrust it in the fire, and lighted a cigar with it, and threw the paper back into the fire and it burnt up.

"My uncle is neither a demon, nor an angel, but just a man like every one else," he dictated, "only not altogether like you and me. He thinks and feels after an earthly fashion, he considers that since we live on the earth, we must not fly off from earth to heaven, where we are not invited for the present, but must busy ourselves with human affairs which are our calling. Therefore he analyses all earthly matters and especially life, as it is, not as we should like it to be. He believes in good and at the same

time in evil, in the noble and in the base. He believes also in love and friendship, only he does not think they have fallen from heaven, but he considers that they came into existence together with men and for men, and that they too ought to be understood, and in fact generally that one ought to look at things steadily, in their actual bearings, and not be carried away God knows where. Among honest men he admits the possibility of a friendliness, which from frequent intercourse and habit turns into friendship. But he considers also that from separation habits lose their strength and people forget one another and that this is by no means a crime. For this reason he is convinced that I shall forget you and you me. This seems to me—and probably also to you—strange, but he advises us to accustom ourselves to this thought, so that we shall both avoid being deceived. As to love this is his view, roughly speaking; he does not believe in eternal and unchanging love, just as he does not believe in ghosts—and he advises us not to believe in it. However, he advises me to think on this subject as little as possible and I advise you the same. It will come, he says, of itself, without any invitation; he says that life does not consist of love only, that like everything else it has its fitting season, but to dream your whole life of one love is absurd. Those who seek it and cannot do without it a minute—live with their hearts at the expense of their heads. My uncle likes to be busy with work, and advises me to do the like and I you; we belong to society, he says, which has need of us; while he is busy, he does not forget his own interests; his work gains money and money brings comfort, which he likes extremely. Moreover, he has perhaps plans in consequence of which I shall not probably be his heir. My uncle is not always thinking of his official work and of his factory; he knows by heart not only Pushkin—”

“You, uncle?” said Alexandre astonished.

“Yes, you will see some day. Write:”

“He reads in two languages whatever appears worthy of note in all branches of human knowledge, loves art, has an excellent collection of pictures of the Flemish school—that is his hobby—often goes to the theatre, but he is not in a fuss and fidget, and does not sigh and moan, thinking that this is childish, that one must control oneself, not obtrude

one's emotions on any one, because nobody cares about them. He does not speak a strange tongue either and he advises me not to, and so do I advise you. Good-bye, write to me rather less often and don't waste time for nothing. Your friend so and so. Now, the day of the month."

"How can I send such a letter?" said Alexandr, "'write rather less often'—write that to the man who came over a hundred and sixty miles on purpose to say a last good-bye to me! 'I advise you so, and so, and so': he is just as clever as I am, he came out second."

"No matter, send it all the same, perhaps he will learn something from it; it will lead him to several new reflections; though you have taken your degrees, your education is only just beginning."

"I cannot make up my mind, uncle, to——"

"I never interfere in what doesn't concern me, but you yourself asked me to do something for you; well, as you like; I only give you my opinion."

"Forgive me, uncle; I will obey you," said Alexandr, and at once sealed up the letter.

Having sealed up one, he began to look for the other, to Sophia. He looked on the table—not there; under the table—not there either; in the desk—it was not there.

"What are you looking for?" said his uncle.

"I am looking for another letter—to Sophia."

And his uncle too began to look about.

"Where can it be?" said Piotr Ivanitch, "I hope I did not throw it in the fire."

"Uncle! what have you done? you actually lighted your cigar with it!" said Alexandr in great distress, picking up the charred fragments of the letter.

"Is it possible?" cried his uncle, "how did I do that? I did not notice it; only imagine my having burnt such a precious thing. However, do you know what? from one point of view it is positively a good thing."

"Oh, uncle! good God! not from any point of view can it be a good thing," said Alexandr in despair.

"I assure you it was a good thing; you will not have time to write to her by this post, and by the next you will certainly be in a different mood, you will be busy with your

new work ; you will not be at the same stage and in this way you will commit one folly the less."

"What will she think of me?"

"Why what she likes, And I think it will be a gain to her. I suppose you are not going to marry her? She will think you have forgotten her. She will forget you herself and will have the less reason to blush before her future husband, when she assures him that she has never loved any one but him."

"You are a strange man, uncle ! for you there is no such thing as constancy, no sacred vows. Life is so sweet, so full of charm, of subtlety, it is like a smooth, resplendent lake."

"Where yellow flowers grow, I suppose !" put in his uncle.

"Like a lake," continued Alexandr, "it is full of something mysterious, alluring, hiding within it so much."

"Mud, my dear boy."

"Why do you bring in mud, uncle, why do you destroy and put an end to all pleasure, hope, bliss—why do you look at the dark side ?"

"I look at reality, and I advise you to do the same ; you will not be taken in then. According to your notions life is sweet in the provinces, where they know nothing about it—there they are not men, but angels : Zayeshaloff for instance—a noble fellow ; your auntie—a sublime sensitive spirit, and Sophia, I fancy, is just such a silly creature as your auntie.

"No more, uncle !" said Alexandr driven to fury.

"And still more such idealists as you : they go blindfold through life, groping after unchanging love and friendship. For the hundredth time I say, it was a pity for you to come !"

"Will she assure her husband that she has never loved any one ?" said Alexandr almost to himself.

"Why ! you are back at the same subject again!"

"No, I am convinced that she will straightway with noble frankness give him my letters and——"

"And keepsakes ?" said Piotr Ivanitch.

"Yes, and the tokens of our affection, and will say : Here this was he who first touched the chords of my heart ; about whose name they first vibrated."

His uncle's brows began to contract and his eyes opened wide. Alexandr stopped.

"Why did you cease to touch her chords then? Well my dear boy, your Sophia certainly is a fool, if she commits any folly of that kind; I suppose she has a mother, or somebody who can prevent her? God knows what she will make her husband suspect; I daresay, the marriage will even be broken off, and why? because you gathered some yellow flowers together. . . . No, things are not done like that. Well, since you can write in Russian, we will go tomorrow to the office of the department; I have already spoken of you to an old fellow-clerk of mine, now the chief of the department; he told me there was a vacancy; we must not lose time. What is that you are pulling out of that pile of papers?"

"My university notes. Allow me to read you a few pages from the lectures of Ivan Semenitch about the Art of Greece."

He was already beginning to turn over the pages in haste.

"Oh, please, spare me!" said Piotr Ivanitch frowning. "But what is that?"

"My dissertations. I should like to show them to my chief; especially one scheme here which I elaborated."

"Ah! one of those schemes which have been carried out a thousand years ago, or which is impossible and useless to carry out at all; you will never write anything worth having in that way, and you will waste time."

"What? after having heard so many lectures."

"They are of use to you for a time, but now you must see, read, learn and do what you are told."

"How will the chief understand my qualifications?"

"He will understand them soon enough; he is first rate at understanding. And what kind of post would you like to occupy?"

"I don't know, uncle, what kind of—"

"There are posts of minister," remarked Piotr Ivanitch, "and deputy-ministers, directors, vice-directors, chiefs of departments, branch-chiefs, their assistants, officials of several orders."

Alexandr thought a minute. He was abashed and did not know which to choose.

"Well, to begin with the post of a branch-chief would do very well," he said.

"Yes, very well!" repeated Piotr Ivanitch.

"I could see something of the work, uncle, and then in two months or so I might even be a chief of a department."

His uncle pricked up his ears.

"Of course, of course!" he said : "then in three months a director ; then in a year a minister ; don't you think so?"

Alexandr blushed and was silent.

"The chief of the department told you, I suppose, what was the post vacant?" he asked after a pause.

"No," answered his uncle :—"he did not say, but we had better leave it to him ; we should find it difficult, you see, to choose, but he will know what to appoint you to. Don't talk to him of the difficulty you feel in choosing a post, and of your schemes not a word. I would not advise you to talk of *material tokens* to the pretty girls here ; they won't know how to take you ! This is too elevated for them ; even I hardly fathomed it, and they will make faces at you."

While his uncle was speaking Alexandr was balancing a packet in his hand.

"What have you there?"

Alexandr had been impatiently expecting this question.

"This—I have long wanted to show you . . . poems ; you once showed an interest——"

"I don't remember it at all ; I think I did not show any interest."

"You see, uncle, I regard official life as a dry occupation, in which the soul has no part, but the soul thirsts for self-expression, it thirsts to share with others the overflow of emotions and thoughts which fill it."

"Well, what of it?" asked his uncle impatiently.

| "I feel an impulse to creative work."

"Which means, you would like some other occupation besides official duties—for instance some translation? Well, it's very praiseworthy ; what is it to be, literary work?"

"Yes, uncle, I wanted to ask you, if you had a chance of getting anything inserted——"

"Are you convinced that you have talent? without it

of course you can do hackwork in literature but what is the use of it? If you have talent, it is a different matter; you can work; you will do much that is worth doing and besides it is capital—it is worth more than your hundred serfs."

"Do you measure this too in money? Fame! fame! that is the poet's true reward."

"There is no such thing as fame nowadays. There is notoriety, but of fame you hear nothing at all, or perhaps it has taken to appearing in another form; the better a man writes the more money he gets. However in these days a decent author lives decently, he is not frozen and starved to death in a garret, though people don't run after him in the street and point at him with their fingers, as though he were a clown; they have learnt that a poet is not a god but a man; that he looks, walks, thinks, and does silly things just like other people; why do you look like that?"

"Like other people—what will you say next, uncle? how can any one say such things? A poet is marked off by a special stamp; there are mysterious tokens of the existence in him of higher powers."

"Yes, just as in some others—in the mathematician and the watchmaker or even the manufacturer, like myself. Newton, Gutenberg, Watt, were also endowed with higher powers, like Shakespeare, Dante and the rest. If I could manage by some special process to work our Petersburg clay till china could be made of it better than Saxony or Sèvres, do you consider that this would not show the possession of higher powers?"

"You are mixing up art with manufactures, uncle."

"God forbid! Art is one thing, manufacture is another, but there may be creative genius in one just as much as in the other, and similarly there may not. If there is not, the manufacturer is simply called a manufacturer, and not a creative genius, and the poet too without genius is not a poet, but a rhymer . . . . Haven't you been told about this at the university? Pray what did you learn there?"

The uncle began to be vexed with himself for having been led into such an exposition of what he considered commonplace truisms.

"It's like a 'sincere outburst of feeling,'" he reflected.  
"Show me what have you there?" he demanded;  
"verses?"

His uncle took the papers and began to read the first page.

"Whence the cloud of pain and sorrow  
Swooping sometimes suddenly  
On the heart with life at conflict."

He began to smoke a cigar and continued :—

"Filling it with passion high.

"Why in time of storm and tempest  
Doth some gloomy dream of ill,  
With unfathomable sadness  
Strike the inmost spirit chill.

"Of the distant skies the silence  
Fills us now with dread and fright——"

"'Dread' and 'fright' one and the same thing."

"I gaze upwards; the moon soundless,"

"That's not so bad and not good!" he said as he finished it. However others have begun worse than that; you can try a little, write, work at it if you have the inclination; possibly talent may show itself; then it will be a different matter."

Alexandr was very downcast. He had expected a very different criticism. He was a little consoled by reflecting that his uncle was a cold man almost destitute of soul.

"Here is a translation from Schiller," he said.

"Well; I will look at it. Have you learnt foreign languages too then?"

"I know French, German, and a little English."

"I congratulate you, you should have told me so before; there's a good deal to be made of you. You talked to me long ago about political economy, philosophy, archaeology, God knows what all. But of the most important thing not a word—misplaced modesty. I will get you some literary work at once."

"Really, uncle? how good you are!—allow me to embrace you."

"Wait till I have got it for you."

"Will you not show any of my compositions to my future chief to give him an idea of me?"

"No, it is not necessary: if there is any need, you show it yourself, but perhaps it will not be needed. Do you make me a present of your dissertations and compositions?"

"Make you a present of them?—by all means, uncle," said Alexandr, who was rather flattered by this request on the part of his uncle. "Would you not like me to make you an index of all the articles in chronological order?"

"No, there's no need of that. . . . Thanks for the present. Yevsay! take these papers to Vassily."

"Why to Vassily? surely to your study."

"He asked me for some paper to paste on something."

"What, uncle?" cried Alexandr in horror, clutching the heap back again.

"You gave them to me you know, and what does it matter to you what use I make of your present?"

"You are quite ruthless!" he groaned in despair, clasping his manuscripts in both hands to his heart.

"Alexandr, listen to me," said his uncle, taking the manuscript from him:—"you will not have to blush hereafter and you will thank me for it."

Alexandr let the manuscripts drop out of his hands.

"There, take them away, Yevsay," said Piotr Ivanitch. "Well now your room is tidy and nice, there is no rubbish lying about; it will depend on you whether it is filled with worthless litter or with something sensible. Let us go to the factory for a walk, to get a breath of fresh air and to see how they are working."

One morning Piotr Ivanitch took his nephew to the office of the department, and while he himself was talking to his friend the chief of the department, Alexandr began to make acquaintance with this new world. He was absorbed in dreaming of schemes and was cudgelling his brains to think what political question would be put for him to solve, and meanwhile he stood and looked about.

"Exactly like my uncle's factory!" he decided at last: "Just as there one overseer takes a piece of the soft stuff, throws it into a machine, turns it once, twice, three times—and lo and behold it comes out a cone, an oval, or a semi-circle; then he passes it to another, who bakes it in the fire, a third gilds it, a fourth engravés it and it comes out a cup,

or a vase, or a saucer. And here ; a casual petitioner comes in, almost crawling, and with a pitiful smile hands in a paper—an overseer takes it, only just runs his pen across it, and hands it to another, who throws it into a mass of thousands of other papers—but it is not lost ; stamped with a number it passes unharmed through twenty hands, multiplying and begetting more of its own kind. At last when it is covered with the dust of ages, they disturb it and deliberate over it. And every day, every hour, to-day, to-morrow and for all time the bureaucratic machine works smoothly, without hitch or pause, as though not made of men, but as though it were made of wheels and springs. But where is the intelligence animating and moving this edifice of papers ? " thought Alexandr : " in the books, in the papers themselves or in the heads of these men ? "

And what faces he saw here ; such faces seem not to be met in the street walking in the light of heaven : here one fancies they were born, and reared to manhood in their places and here they will die. Adouev looked attentively at the chief of the department ; like Jupiter the Thunderer, he opens his mouth—and a Mercury runs up with a copper number on his breast ; he holds out his hand with some paper ; ten hands are stretched out to take it.

" Ivan Ivanitch ! " said he.

Ivan Ivanitch jumped up from a table, ran up to Jupiter and was beside him in the twinkling of an eye.

And Alexandr felt overawed, though he could not himself have said why.

" Give me my snuff-box ! "

With both hands he held the open snuff-box to him in a servile manner.

" Now examine him ! " said the chief pointing to Adouev.

" So this is who is to examine me ! " thought Adouev, looking at the yellow face and threadbare elbows of Ivan Ivanitch. " Is it possible that this man could settle questions of State ? "

" Have you a good hand ? " asked Ivan Ivanitch.

" A good hand ? "

" Yes, a good handwriting. I will trouble you to copy that paper."

Alexandr was surprised at this request ; but he did so. Ivan Ivanitch made a grimace when he looked at what he had written.

"A poor handwriting," he said to the chief of the department. The latter looked at it.

"Yes, it's not good; he can't write fair copies. Well let him for a time write out absence permits, and then when he is a little used to it, set him to writing forms for deeds; perhaps he will do; he has been educated at a university."

Very soon Adouev too became one of the springs of the machine. He wrote, wrote, wrote unendingly, and began to wonder how it was possible to do anything else in the morning; but when he remembered his dissertations, he blushed.

"Uncle!" he thought; "in one thing you were right, cruelly right; can it be so in everything? can I have been mistaken in those inspired thoughts kept to myself alone and that warm trust in love, in friendship, and in men, and in myself? What is life then?"

He bent over his papers and scribbled all the more zealously, but tears were glistening on his eyelashes.

"Fortune certainly smiles upon you," said Piotr Ivanitch to his nephew; "I was in an office a whole year to begin with without salary, but you have been put on the upper scale of salary at once; why it's 750 roubles and with the Christmas extras it will be 1000 roubles. It's splendid for the first start! The chief of the department praises you; only he says you are careless; sometimes you don't put in your stops, and sometimes you will forget to write a synopsis of the paper. Pray get out of that way; the chief thing is to pay attention to what is before your eyes, and don't go flying off aloft."

The uncle pointed upwards with his hand. From this time he behaved more affectionately to his nephew.

"What a splendid fellow my head-clerk is, uncle!" said Alexandre one day.

"And how do you know that?"

"I have made friends with him. Such an elevated soul, such a pure noble turn of mind! and with his sub too; he is a man, I think, of firm will, of iron character."

"You have had time already to make friends with him?"

"Yes, indeed."

"Did not your head-clerk invite you to go to see him on Thursdays?"

"Yes, indeed; every Thursday. I fancy he feels a special attraction to me."

"And he asked his sub to lend him money?"

"Yes, uncle, a trifle. I gave him twenty-five roubles which I had with me; he asked for eighty more."

"You have given it him already! Ah!" said his uncle with vexation:—"I am partly to blame in the matter, for not having warned you beforehand; but I thought that you weren't simple to such a point as to lend money after only a fortnight's acquaintance. There is no help for it now, we will divide the guilt; for twelve and a half roubles you may count on me."

"Why, uncle, surely he will return it?"

"You needn't reckon on that! I know him; I lost 100 roubles over him when I was in that office. He borrows from every one. Now, if he asks you again, you tell him that I beg him to remember his debt to me—he will soon stop! and don't go to see him."

"Why, uncle?"

"He's a gambler. He will sit you down with two more fine fellows like himself, and they will play into each other's hands and leave you without a penny."

"A gambler!" said Alexandr in amazement, "is it possible? He seems so inclined to sincere outbursts."

"But you tell him, as though incidentally in conversation, that I have taken all your money to take care of it, and you will see whether he will be so inclined to sincere outbursts, and whether he will ever invite you to come to him on Thursdays."

Alexandr grew thoughtful, his uncle shook his head.

"And you imagined that they were angels sitting by you there! Sincere outbursts, special attraction, indeed! So it seems it has never struck you to reflect whether they might not be scoundrels? It was a pity for you to come!" he said; "certainly, it was a pity!"

One day Alexandr was only just awake when Yevsay gave him a large parcel with a note from his uncle.

"At last here is some literary employment for you," was written on the letter. "I met an acquaintance of mine, a journalist yesterday; he has sent you some work on trial."

Alexandr's hands trembled with pleasure when he broke the seal of the parcel. It was a German handwriting.

"What is it—prose?" he said, "about what?"

And he read written above in pencil.

"On manures, an article for our column on agriculture. You are requested to return it as soon as possible."

A long while he sat gloomily before the article, then slowly, with a sigh, he took his pen and began to translate it. In two days the article was ready and despatched.

"Capital, capital!" said Piotr Ivanitch a few days later. "The editor was very pleased with it, only he thinks the style is a little too ornate; but one can't expect everything at first. He wants to make your acquaintance. Call on him to-morrow at seven in the evening; he will have another article for you by then."

"On the same subject again, uncle?"

"No; on something different; he did tell me but I have forgotten—oh! yes—on potato starch. You must have been born, Alexandr, with a silver spoon in your mouth. I begin at last to suspect that something will be made of you; soon perhaps I shall stop saying to you, 'Why did you come?' A month has not gone by, and already good luck is being showered upon you from all sides. 1000 roubles from your office, and the editor offers 100 roubles a month for sixty-four pages of print; that makes 2200 roubles you know! No, I did not begin like that!" he said, knitting his eyebrows a little. "Write and tell your mother you are provided for and how. I will answer her too, I will tell her that in return for her kindness to me, I have done all I could for you."

"Mamma will be—very grateful to you, uncle; and I too," said Alexandr with a sigh, but this time he did not throw himself on to his uncle's neck.

### CHAPTER III

MORE than two years had passed by. Who would have recognised our provincial in the fashionably-dressed and easy-mannered young man? He had changed very much, and grown manly. The roundness of the lines of his boyish face, the softness and delicacy of his skin, the down on his

chin had all disappeared. The bashful shyness and graceful awkwardness of his movement had gone. His features had become mature and grown into a physiognomy and the physiognomy showed character. The lilies and roses had disappeared as though under a light covering of sunburn. The down on his face had turned into slight whiskers. His light hesitating step had become a firm even gait. His voice had gained some bass notes. From the roughly outlined sketch had come a finished portrait. The boy had turned into a man. In his eyes was the light of self-reliance and confidence. The ecstatic expression of Alexandr's face in former days was toned down by a slight shade of melancholy: the first sign of doubt having stolen into his heart, and perhaps the only consequence of his uncle's lessons and the merciless analysis to which he exposed everything which presented itself to Alexandr's eyes or heart. Alexandr had at last acquired tact, which is the power of adapting oneself to men. He did not throw himself into everybody's arms especially after the man, inclined to sincere outbursts, in spite of his uncle's warnings, had cleared him out at cards on two occasions, and the man of firm character and iron will had borrowed a considerable sum of money from him. Other people too and other incidents worked in the same direction. At one place he noticed how they laughed in their sleeves at his youthful enthusiasm, and nicknamed him the *romantic*. At another they hardly paid him any attention, because no one could hope to gain or lose anything from him. He did not give dinners, did not keep a carriage, and did not play high. At first Alexandr's heart was sick and sore at these discrepancies between his rose-coloured dreams and the reality. It never entered his head to ask himself: But what have I done that is distinctive, in what am I distinguished from the common herd? Where are my merits and why ought they to notice me? But meanwhile his vanity suffered.

Then he began by degrees to admit the thought that in life clearly all was not roses, but that there were also thorns which sometimes prick a little, but not seriously and not as his uncle made out. And then he began to learn to control himself, he did not so often betray his emotions and impulses and more rarely spoke in a high-flown language, at least before strangers.

But all the same, to the no small regret of Piotr Ivanitch, he was still far from coldly analysing into their first elements all that moves and agitates the heart of man. As for dragging to light all the mysteries and enigmas of the heart, he did not like even to listen to it.

Piotr Ivanitch would give him something of a lesson in the morning: Alexandr would listen, be perplexed or deeply thoughtful, and then he would go out somewhere in the evening and come home a different man. The charm and intoxication of the ball-room, the strains of music, the bare shoulders, the ardent glances, the smiles of rosy lips would not let him sleep all night. Visions floated before him of the waist which he had pressed in his arms, of the prolonged languorous gaze which had been cast on him at parting, of the feverish breath which had ravished him in the waltz, or the conversation at the window whispered under cover of the murmur of the mazurka, when the eyes spoke so sincerely, while the tongue was talking of no matter what. And his heart beat; he clutched at his pillow convulsively and lay tossing for hours in his bed.

"Where is love? Oh, love, I thirst for thee!" he said, "and will love come soon? when will these divine moments come to me, the delicious torture, the shudder of bliss, tears—" and so forth.

The next day he would make his appearance at his uncle's.

"What a party it was, uncle, last night at the Zareysky's!" he said, absorbed in memories of the ball.

"Was it a pleasant one?"

"Oh, heavenly."

"A pretty good supper?"

"I did not have any."

"How was that? No supper at your age when you can get it! But I see you have adopted our ways in good earnest, even more than you need to. Was everything successful then? the dress, the lighting?"

"Yes."

"Nice people?"

"Oh, yes! very nice. Such eyes, such shoulders!"

"Were there many pretty girls?"

"Yes, indeed; but it's a pity they are all so much alike. What one does or says in any special circumstances,

you notice the next repeats exactly the same, just as though it were a lesson learnt by heart. There was one—not altogether like the rest . . . but otherwise there was no sign of independence nor character. Their movements, their looks—all exactly alike: you hear no original thought or flash of feeling—it is all disguised and covered up under the same external polish. It seems as though nothing would make them open out. Is it possible that they will always be locked up and will never come out to any one? Can it be that they wear stays that will always stifle the sigh of love and the groan of the tortured heart? Can no liberty be given to emotion?"

"Everything will come out to their husbands, though if they think like you—at least from what you say—a good many will remain old maids to the end of time. There are some idiotic enough to let what ought to be hidden and stifled come out before it is time—um! they pay for it afterwards in tears; it's a bad bargain!"

"Is it a question of *bargains* in this too, uncle?"

"Yes, as in everything, my dear boy; and one who does not reckon the cost of a bargain we call a reckless fool. It is short and clear."

"Oh, but to lock up in your breast the generous impulses of the heart!"

"Oh, I know you will not lock them up; you are ready in the street, in the theatre, anywhere, to throw yourself on your friend's neck and sob."

"And why a reckless fool, uncle? You should have said only that he is a man of strong passions, that a man who feels so is capable of everything generous and noble, and incapable—"

"Incapable of reckoning, that is, reflection. He is a grand figure—your man of strong passions, of titanic emotions! How much of it pray is merely physical temperament? Transports, exultations indeed, the man is below the dignity of a man in all that, and has nothing to pride himself upon. We must ask whether he knows how to control his feelings; if he knows how to do that, then he is a man."

"According to you, feeling has to be controlled like steam," observed Alexandr, "now a little let off, then suddenly stopped, opening a valve and shutting it."

"Yes, nature has given man such a valve—and not for nothing—it is reason, and you don't always make use of it—it's a pity ! but you're a good sort of fellow !"

"No, uncle, it's sad to hear you ; better let me go and make acquaintance with that lady who has lately arrived in town."

"With whom ? Madame Lubetsky? Was she there yesterday ?"

"Yes, she talked to me a long while about you, asked after some business matter of hers."

"Oh, to be sure ; by the way—" The uncle took a paper out of a box. "Take her that paper, tell her that only yesterday and by the merest chance they let me have it from the office ; explain the matter clearly to her ; of course you heard what I said to the official?"

"Yes, I know, I know, I will explain it."

Alexandr clutched the paper with both hands, and stuffed it into his pocket. Piotr Ivanitch looked at him.

"But what made you think of making her acquaintance ? She is not very charming, I should suppose, with a wart on her nose."

"A wart ? I don't remember. How did you notice that, uncle ?"

"On her nose, and he did not notice it ! What do you want from her ?"

"She is so kind and so distinguished."

"Could you not notice the wart on her nose, and yet have found out that she is kind and distinguished ? It's very queer. But stop—she has a daughter to be sure—that little brunette. Ah ! now I don't wonder at it. So that is why you did not notice the wart on her nose."

Both smiled.

"But I do wonder, uncle," said Alexandr ; "how you noticed the wart before the daughter."

"Give me back the paper. When you are there, I suppose you will let off all your feeling and altogether forget to shut the valve, you will make some mistake and there's no telling what you will explain."

"No, uncle, I won't make a mistake. As for papers, as you like, I won't give it then, but will go at once." And he vanished from the room.

Up to this time business had gone steadily on its usual

course. At the office they noticed Alexandr's abilities and had given him a pretty good position. And on the journal, too, Alexandr had become a person of consideration. He undertook the selection as well as the translation and correction of foreign articles, and wrote himself various theoretical articles on agriculture. His income was in his own opinion larger than he needed, though still insufficient for his uncle's ideas. But he was not always working for money. He had not renounced his consoling belief in another higher vocation. His youthful strength was equal to everything. He stole time from sleep, and office work, and wrote both verses and stories and historical sketches and biographies. His uncle did not now cover his screens with his compositions, but read them in silence, then gave a low whistle, or said, "Yes! this is better than you used to do." A few articles appeared under a *nom de plume*. With a tremor of pleasure Alexandr listened to the favourable criticisms of friends, of whom he had a number, at his office, and at the coffee-house or at private houses. His most cherished dream—after love—was thus fulfilled. The future promised him much that was brilliant, many triumphs; a destiny—not altogether ordinary—seemed to be awaiting him—when suddenly—

A few months had passed by. Alexandr was scarcely to be seen, he seemed to be lost. He went less often to his uncle's. The latter attributed it to his being busy, and did not disturb him. But the editor of the journal, meeting Piotr Ivanitch one day, complained that Alexandr kept back articles. The uncle promised to take the next opportunity of getting an explanation from his nephew. An opportunity presented itself three days after. Alexandr ran in the morning into his uncle's apartment in a state of exultation. There was a restless happiness apparent in every gesture and movement.

"Good morning, uncle; oh, how glad I am to see you!" he said, and was going to embrace him, but his uncle had time to escape behind the table.

"Good morning, Alexandr! Why have we seen nothing of you for so long?"

"I . . . have been busy, uncle; I have been making an abstract from the German economists."

"Ah! why did the editor tell me such fibs then? He

said to me three days ago that you were doing nothing for him—there's journalistic morality! Next time I meet him I will let him know. . . .”

“No, you must not say anything to him,” interposed Alexandr; “I have not sent him my work, and that is why he told you.”

“What is the matter with you? You have such a holiday face! have they given you an assistant pray, or the cross of honour?”

Alexandr shook his head.

“Well, is it money, then?”

“No.”

“Then, why do you look like a victorious general? If there's nothing, don't disturb me, but sit down instead and write to Moscow to the Merchant Doubasoff, about despatching as quickly as possible the remainder of the money due. Read his letter through. Where is it? Here.”

Both were silent and began to write.

“I have finished!” cried Alexandr in a few minutes.

“That's smart, you're a fine fellow! Show it me. What is this? You are writing to me. ‘Piotr Ivanitch!’ His name is Timothy Nikovitch. How 520 roubles! 5200! What is the matter with you, Alexandr?”

Piotr Ivanitch laid down his pen and looked at his nephew. He reddened.

“Do you notice nothing in my face?” he asked.

“Yes, some silliness. . . . Stop. . . . you are in love,” said Piotr Ivanitch.

Alexandr was silent.

“It's so, then? I have guessed right!”

Alexandr with a triumphant smile and a beaming expression nodded energetically.

“So, that's it! How was it I didn't guess it at once? So that's why you have grown lazy, and that's why we have seen nothing of you everywhere. The Zareyskys and the Skatchins have been worrying me with ‘Where's Alexandr Fedoritch?’ So he's been far away—in the seventh heaven!”

Piotr Ivanitch began to write again.

“With Nadinka Lubetsky!” said Alexandr.

“I didn't inquire,” replied his uncle; “whoever it may be—they are all as silly as one another; it's all the same.”

"All the same ! Nadinka ! that angel ! is it possible you haven't noticed her ? can you say that she is like the other worldly, affected dolls ? You look at her face ; what a tender deep soul lies behind it. She is not only a girl of feeling, but of thought . . . . a deep nature."

His uncle set to work scribbling on a paper with his pen, but Alexandr went on :

"In her talk you don't hear the hackneyed commonplace platitudes. How deeply she understands life ! You poison life by your views, but Nadinka reconciles me to it."

Alexandr was silent for a minute and relapsed completely into reveries of Nadinka. Then he began again.

"When she raises her eyes, you see at once what a passionate and tender heart they interpret. And her voice, her voice ! what melody, what softness in it ! but when that voice sounds with an avowal . . . . no higher bliss on earth ! Uncle ! what a glorious thing life is ! how happy I am."

Tears were starting into his eyes ; he flung himself on his uncle and embraced him with all his might.

"Alexandr !" screamed Piotr Ivanitch jumping up ; "shut up your valve directly, you have let off all your steam ! You silly fellow ! look what you have done in one second ; just two idiocies ; you have rumpled my hair and spilt the ink. I thought you had quite got out of those ways. You haven't been like this for a long while. Do for God's sake look at yourself in the glass ; could there be a more silly countenance ? and not an idiot !"

"Ha, ha, ha ! I am happy, uncle !"

"That's evident. Well, what am I to do now with the letter ?"

"Let me—I will scrape it, and it will not be noticed," said Alexandr. He flung himself against the table with a convulsive shock, began to scrape, to clean, to rub, and rubbed a hole into the letter.

The table tottered under the rubbing and shook the what-not. On the what-not stood an alabaster bust of Sophocles, or Æschylus. The vibration made the respectable tragedian first totter backwards and forwards once or twice on his shaking pedestal ; then he was shaken off the what-not, and was smashed to shivers.

"Your third idiocy, Alexandr !" said Piotr Ivanitch, picking up the pieces, "it cost fifty roubles."

"I will pay for it, uncle ! Oh ! I will pay for it, but don't blame my emotion ; it's pure and generous ; I am happy, so happy ! Good God ! how sweet life is !"

The uncle shook his head.

"When will you have more sense, Alexandr. Pay for it indeed !" he said. "That would be the fourth silliness. You want, I can see, to talk about your happiness. Well, there seems no help for it, so be it, I will give you a quarter of an hour ; sit quietly, don't commit any fifth piece of stupidity, and talk away, and then, after that fresh stupidity you must go away ; I have no time to spare. Well . . . . you are happy . . . . how is that ? Tell me about it quickly."

"I admit it is silly, uncle, but such things cannot be told in this way," replied Alexandr with a modest smile.

"I have paved the way for you, but I see you want to begin with the ordinary prelude. That means that the conversation will last a whole hour ; I haven't time for it ; the post will not wait. You must stop, or better let me tell it myself."

"You ? that's amusing."

"H'm ! listen, it *is* extremely amusing ! You saw your charmer yesterday by herself."

"But how do you know ?" asked Alexandr, going up to his uncle.

"Sit down, sit down, for God's sake, and don't come near the table, you will be smashing something. It's all written in your face, I will read it off. Well, you had an explanation," said his uncle.

Alexandr blushed and was silent. It was clear that his uncle was right again.

"You were both very foolish as lovers always are," said Piotr Ivanitch.

The nephew made a gesture of impatience.

"It all began from trifles when you were left alone, from a fancy-work pattern perhaps," the uncle went on ; "you asked whom she was working it for. She answered, 'For mamma or for auntie,' or something of that sort, and you shivered as if you were in a fever."

"There you have not guessed right ; that was no fancy-work ; we were in the garden," Alexandr blurted out and relapsed into silence.

" Well, then, from flowers, I suppose," said Piotr Ivanitch ; " perhaps from a yellow flower, it makes no difference what is before your eyes provided only it serves to start the conversation ; words don't come too readily to the tongue in such circumstances. You asked whether she liked flowers, she answered ' Yes.' ' Why ? ' you ask. ' Oh, because,' she said, and then you were both silent, because you wanted to say something altogether different and the conversation did not progress. Then you looked at one another, smiled and blushed."

" Oh, uncle, how you talk ! " said Alexandr in evident confusion.

" Then," continued his inexorable uncle, " you began in a roundabout way to talk about a new world having opened itself to you. She looked suddenly at you, as though she were hearing something new and unexpected ; you, I expect, were at your wits' end, and in confusion, then you said, scarcely audibly again, that only now you understood the value of life, that before you saw her—what her ? Maria, or what ? "

" Nadinka."

" You had already seen her in a dream, that you had foreseen your meeting, that some affinity had brought you together, and that now you dedicate to her alone all your verses and prose. And, I expect, your hands weren't still a moment ! no doubt you were upsetting or breaking something."

" Uncle ! you must have been listening to us !" shrieked Alexandr beside himself.

" Yes, I was there behind a bush. I have nothing better to do than to run after you and listen to all your absurdities."

" How then do you know all this ? " asked Alexandr in perplexity.

" Wonderful, isn't it ? from Adam and Eve downwards, it's the same story for everybody with little variation. You a writer and surprised at this ? Now you will be walking on air for the next three days like an imbecile, throwing yourself on every one's neck. I should advise you to lock yourself in your room till that period is over and work off your foolishness on Yevsay, so that none else may see it. Then you will come to your senses a little, and will obtain some further favour—a kiss for instance."

"A kiss from Nadinka! oh, what a high heavenly reward!" cried Alexandr almost weeping.

"Heavenly!"

"Why, do you call it earthly, material?"

"Well, one must admit a kiss is an electric act; lovers are just like two electric batteries, both heavily charged; the electricity is let off in kisses, and when it's fully let off—then good-bye to love, the cooling process follows."

"Uncle!"

"Oh, I forgot; 'material tokens of immaterial relations' are still prominent objects in your brain. You will be collecting all sorts of rubbish again and poring and dreaming over them, and work will be laid on the shelf."

Alexandr at once clapped his hand on his pocket.

"What, there already? so you will do exactly what men have done ever since the creation of the world."

"Then it is what you too have done, uncle?"

"Yes, it's only a little sillier."

"Sillier! Don't you call it silliness just because my love will be deeper, stronger than yours, because I don't make light of my feelings, and turn them into ridicule as coldly as you, nor tear every veil off the sacred mystery."

"Your love will be just like other people's, neither deeper nor stronger; and you too will tear the veil off the sacred mystery; the only difference is that you will believe in eternal, unchanging love, and will think about nothing else, and that is just what is so silly; you are only preparing for yourself more unhappiness than you need."

"Ah!" said Alexandr, "in spite of your prophecies, I will be happy, I will love once and for ever."

"Oh, no! I foresee you will break a good many more of my properties before you've done. But that does not signify; love is love, no one hinders you; we don't generally take love in a boy of your age very seriously, only don't let it go so far as to make you neglect business, love is love and business is business."

"Well, I am making an abstract from the German."

"There, there, you are not doing anything of the sort, you are giving yourself up to 'soft emotions,' and the editor will get rid of you."

"Let him! I don't depend on him. Can I be thinking now of contemptible money—now, when—"

"Contemptible money, indeed! You had better build yourself a hut upon the mountains, live on bread and water, and sing—

'A cottage poor with thee,  
Is Paradise to me,'

only when you've no more contemptible money, don't come to me, I won't give you——"

"I don't think I have often troubled you."

"So far, I'm thankful to say you haven't, only it may come to that if you neglect work; love too costs money; you want to be extra smart and lots of different expenses. Oh, love at twenty! Come that's contemptible, contemptible if you like! There's no sense in it."

"What love has sense in it, uncle? Love at forty?"

"I don't know what love is like at forty, but love at thirty-seven——"

"Like yours?"

"Yes, if you like, like mine."

"That is, no love at all."

"How do you know?"

"Do you mean to say *you* can love?"

"Why not? Am I not a man, or am I seventy? Only if I love, I love reasonably, I reflect on myself, I don't smash or upset things."

"Reasonable love! a fine kind of love that reflects on itself!" remarked Alexandr scoffingly, "that never forgets itself for an instant."

"When it is savage, instinctive," put in Piotr Ivanitch, "it does not reflect, but reasonable feeling must reflect; if it does not, it is not love."

"What is it then?"

"Oh, vileness, as you would call it."

"You—love!" said Alexandr, looking incredulously at his uncle, "ha! ha! ha!"

Piotr Ivanitch went on writing in silence.

"Who is it, uncle?" asked Alexandr.

"Do you want to know?"

"Yes."

"The lady I'm about to marry?"

"You—to marry!" Alexandr could scarcely utter the words; he leaped up from his place and went up to his uncle.

"No closer, no closer, Alexandr, shut off the steam!" said Piotr Ivanitch, seeing his nephew's round eyes of astonishment and quickly collecting round him the various small objects on the table—busts, figures, clocks, and ink-stands.

"And you are so calm! you write letters to Moscow, and talk of outside matters, go to your factory and still talk with such hellish coldness about love!"

"Hellish coldness—that's something new, they say it's hot in hell. But why are you looking at me so strangely?"

"You get married!"

"What is there astonishing in that?" asked Piotr Ivanitch laying down his pen.

"What indeed? you get married and never a word to me!"

"Why I have just told you."

"You mentioned it because it happened to be *a propos* of something."

"I try as far as I can to do everything *a propos*."

"No, you should have communicated your happiness to me first; you know how I love you and how I should participate . . . ."

"I dislike participation in everything and especially in marriage."

"Do you know, uncle?" said Alexandr with animation "it may be . . . . no, I cannot conceal it from you. I am not like that, I must tell all."

"Oh, Alexandr, I've no time to spare; if there's another rigmarole, won't it do to-morrow?"

"I want only to tell you that perhaps . . . . I too am soon to be as happy——"

"What?" asked Piotr Ivanitch, pricking up his ears a little, "that's something curious."

"Ah! curious? then I will torment you: I won't tell you."

Piotr Ivanitch took up an envelope with an air of indifference, put his letter in it and began to seal it up.

✓ "And I too am going to be married perhaps!" said Alexandr in his uncle's ear.

Piotr Ivanitch did not finish sealing the letter up but looked at him very seriously.

"Shut off your steam, Alexandr!" he said.

"You may joke, uncle, you may joke, I am speaking in earnest. I shall ask mamma's consent."

"You get married!"

"And why not?"

"At your age?"

"I am twenty-three."

"It's high time indeed! Why at your age no one marries except peasants, who want some one to do the work in their house."

"But if I am in love with a girl, and there is a possibility of marrying her, then, according to you, ought I not——"

"I don't advise you at any time to marry a woman with whom you are in love."

"What, uncle? that's a new idea; I never heard of it before."

"I should fancy there are things you haven't heard of."

"I always thought that there ought not to be marriage without love."

"Marriage is one thing, love is another," said Piotr Ivanitch.

"What are you marrying for then? For your advantage?"

"To my advantage, certainly, though not for my advantage. Even you will think of advantages when you marry, you will look out, will choose among women."

"Look out, choose!" cried Alexandr wonderingly.

"Yes, choose. For this reason I don't advise you to marry when you are in love. Love, you know, is fleeting—that is a truth that has become a commonplace."

"It is the grossest lie and calumny."

"Well, there is no convincing you now, you will see for yourself in time, but now only mark my words; love is fleeting, I repeat, and then the woman who has perhaps seemed to you the ideal of perfection shows herself to be very imperfect, and there's no help for it then. Love screens the absence of qualities needed in a wife. But when in choosing you consider in cool blood whether such or such a woman has the qualities which you would like to see in your wife, you get the greatest advantage. And if you find such a woman she is certain to continue to please you, because she answers to what you wanted. And so closer ties spring up between her and you, which afterwards go to make you——"

"Love one another?" said Alexandr.

✓ "Yes, and suit one another. Marrying for money—that is low; but to marry without any advantage—that is stupid! . . . but it is not suitable for you to marry at all now."

"When should I marry? When I am growing old? Why should I follow such foolish precedents?"

"You reckon my marriage one? Thanks!"

"I did not mean any reflection on you, uncle, I mean it generally. You hear of a wedding; you go to see it and what do you see? a lovely tender creature who has only been awaiting the magic touch of love to break into a splendid flower, and suddenly they tear her away from her dolls, her nurse, her childish games and dances, and it's well if it's only from all that; but often they don't look into her heart, which very likely is no longer her own. They dress her up in gauze, in blonde, they deck her in flowers, and in spite of her tears, her paleness, they drag her like a victim to the altar and set her beside—whom? Beside an elderly man, generally unattractive, who has already squandered the strength of his youth. He either casts on her the glances of a passion which is an outrage, or coldly scans her from head to foot and thinks to himself apparently, 'You're pretty, yes, on my word with your head full of nonsense; love and roses—I will soon put an end to such folly, it's all silliness! with me you must give up sighing and dreaming and conduct yourself more properly;' or worse still, he is reflecting on her fortune. At the very youngest he is thirty years old. He often has a bald head, though I daresay he has a decoration or star on his breast. And 'this is the man' they tell her to whom are consecrated all the treasures of your youth, for him the first throbbing of your heart, the first avowal, his are your looks and words and maiden caresses, his is your whole life. And all round are standing in the crowd those who are her equals in youth and beauty, who ought to have been in the bridegroom's place. They gaze eagerly at the poor victim and seem to be saying: 'Ah, when we have exhausted our freshness and health, when we are bald, we too will get married and then we too shall carry off such a splendid rose! It's awful!'"

“High-flown, not good, Alexandr!” said Piotr Ivanitch; “have you been writing now for two years on manures, and

potato-starch, and other serious subjects and you still talk in this high-flown way. For goodness' sake, don't give way to ecstasy."

"But, uncle, is not the poet's thought conceived in ecstasy?"

"I don't know how it's conceived, but I know that it comes forth finished from the brain, that is when it has been worked up by meditation: it is only then that it is good. Well, but in your opinion," began Piotr Ivanitch after a pause: "to whom would you give these lovely creatures?"

"To those whom they love, who have not yet lost the bloom of youth and beauty, whom one can see to be still full of life, in whose eyes the fire has not yet died away, who would have brought her the gift of a heart full of love for her, able to understand and to share her emotions when nature claims." . . . .

"I dare say! you mean to such fine fellows as you. If we were living 'in meads and forests thick'—and such a fellow as you had a wife—much he would get by it! for the first year he would be out of his senses, and then he would either take to hanging about behind the scenes of the theatre, or would give his wife a rival in her lady's maid, because nature's claims of which you talk, demand change, novelty—a pretty state of things! And then his wife too, noticing her husband's pranks, would suddenly take a fancy to spurs, parades and masquerades, and would pay him out in his own coin . . . . and without money, it is worse still; he comes begging, 'I have nothing to eat'!"

Piotr Ivanitch made a pitiful face.

"'I am a married man,' he says," continued he. "'I have already three children, help me, I cannot keep them, I am a poor man' . . . . a poor man! what degradation! no, I hope you will not fall into either of these categories."

"I shall fall into the category of happy husbands, uncle, and Nadinka of happy wives. I don't want to be married, as the majority of people marry; they all have the same tale: 'My youth is over, I am tired of solitude, so I must marry!' I am not like that!"

"You are talking nonsense, my dear boy."

"How do you know?"

"Because you are just like other people, and I have

known other people a long while. Come, tell me, why will you get married?"

"Why? Nadinka—my wife!" ejaculated Alexandr, covering his face with his hands.

"Well, you see—you don't know yourself."

"Oh the spirit swoons at the very thought. You don't know how I love her, uncle! I love her as no one ever loved before; with all the strength of my soul—all is hers."

"Really, Alexandr, I would rather have you ranting at me or even if it must be embracing me than repeating that very ridiculous phrase! How it rolls off your tongue! 'as no one ever loved before!'"

Piotr Ivanitch shrugged his shoulders.

"Why, do you mean that this cannot be?"

"Indeed, when I reflect on your love, I really think it is possible; impossible for any love to be more foolish!"

✓ But she says that we must wait a year, that we are young, and ought to test ourselves—for a whole year—and then—

✓ "A year! ah! you should have told me that before!" interposed Piotr Ivanitch; "did she make that condition? What a sensible girl she is. How old is she?"

"Eighteen."

✓ "And you are twenty-three; well, my friend, she has twenty-three times as much sense as you. I see she understands the whole business: she will amuse herself with you, flirt a little and have a good time, and then—these little hussies have an intuition in such things! Well, so you won't be married then. I thought you wanted to fix it up directly and secretly. At your age such follies are so quickly done that one hasn't time to interfere; but in a year's a different thing; by that time she will jilt you."

"She—jilt, flirt; little hussy, indeed! she, Nadinka! for shame, uncle! Whom have you lived with all your life, whom have you had to do with, whom have you loved, that you have such black suspicions?"

"I have lived with men, I have loved a woman."

"She deceive me! That angel, that very embodiment of sincerity, a woman, whom it seems as if God had for the first time created in all the purity and brightness—"

✓ "Still she is a woman, and is certain to deceive you."

"Will you tell me next that I shall jilt her?"

"In time—yes, you will too."

"I! of people you don't know you can conclude what you like; but me—isn't it a sin in you to suspect me of such vileness? What do you imagine me to be?"

"A man."

"All are not alike. You must know that I, not in jest, but in all sincerity have given her a promise to love her all my life; I am ready to confirm it upon oath."

"I know, I know! No decent man doubts the sincerity of the vows he makes to a woman, but afterwards he changes and grows cooler, and does not himself know how. It does not happen intentionally, and there is no vileness in it, no one is to blame; nature does not allow of eternal love. And those who believe in eternal and unchanging love do just the same as those who don't believe in it, only they don't notice it and are unwilling to recognise it; we are above that, they say, we are not men, but angels—all folly!"

"But how is it there are lovers, married people, who love one another for ever and live all their lives together?"

"For ever! if a man's love last a fortnight, he is called fickle, but if for two or three years—at once you say it is for ever! Only consider what love is made up of and then you will see for yourself that it is not for ever! The ardour, the fire and fever-heat of that emotion prevent its being continuous. Lovers, married people, live together all their lives—no doubt! but do they love each other all their lives? are they always in the bondage of their first love? are they seeking one another every minute, constantly gazing at each other, and can they never see enough of one another? In the end what becomes of the little observances, the constant attention, the thirst to be together, the tears, the transport, all the passionate glances? The coldness and awkwardness of husbands has passed into a proverb. 'Their love has turned into friendship!' every one says very seriously; well then! it's no longer love! Friendship! And what is this friendship? A husband and wife are bound together by general interests, circumstances, then common fortunes, and so they live together; if it is not so, then they separate, make new ties—some more quickly than others; then we talk of fickleness! But if they go on living together they come to live by habit, which let me whisper in your ear is

stronger than any kind of love ; it is well called second nature ; except for it men would continue all their lives to suffer from separation from or the death of the beloved object, but you see they are consoled in time. Still the everlasting repetition—For ever, for ever!—they shout it without thinking.”

“How is it, uncle, that you are not afraid on your own account? “It follows that your wife too—forgive me—will deceive you?”

“I don’t think so.”

“What vanity!”

“It isn’t vanity, but prudence.”

“Prudence again!”

“Well, foresight if you like.”

“But if she falls in love with some one else?”

“One must not let it come to that; but even if she were so misguided, with a little skill one might cool down her feelings.”

“Is it possible? is it in your power?”

“Very much so.”

“All deceived husbands would have done so,” said Alexandr, “if there were any means.”

“Not all husbands are alike, my dear boy : some are very indifferent to their wives ; they don’t pay attention to what is going on around them and they don’t care to notice it ; others would be ready to from vanity, but are poor creatures ; they don’t know how to set to work.”

“How will you set to work?”

“That’s my secret ; one could not instil it into you ; you are in delirium.”

Piotr Ivanitch was silent, and went on writing.

“But what a life!” began Alexandr ; “not to forget yourself, but always to be thinking—thinking—no, I feel this is not so ! I want to live without your cold analysis, not thinking whether trouble and danger are awaiting me hereafter or not, it’s all the same ! Why should I think of it beforehand and poison——”

“Why! I have often told you why, but he always comes back to his same point. Because when you foresee danger, obstacles, trouble, then you can more easily oppose them or endure them ; you will not go out of your mind ; you won’t die ; and when pleasure comes, you won’t

be dancing about and smashing busts—is it clear? One tells him—here this is the beginning, look at it, and judge by it of the end; but he covers his eyes and turns away his head just as though it were some bogey, and goes on living like a child. You would say—live day by day, as men lived sitting at their cottage doors, reckon your life by dinners, dances, love, and unchanging friendship. Always wanting the golden age! I have told you already that with your ideas it's well to stay in the country with your good lady and half-a-dozen children, but here one must work at a business; this means that you must incessantly be thinking and remembering what you did yesterday, what you are doing to-day, so as to know what you must do to-morrow—that is to say, you must live with never-flagging control of yourself and your occupations. It is only in this way we can attain to anything practical; and so . . . . But what's the good of arguing with you—you are delirious for the present? Ah! it's just on the hour. Not a word more, Alexandr; go away, I will not listen; dine with me to-morrow; there will be some few people."

"Friends of yours?"

"Yes—Koneff, Smirnoff, Fedoroff—you know them, and some few besides."

"Koneff, Smirnoff, Fedoroff! But these are the very people you have to do with in business."

"Why, yes; these are all indispensable people."

"So these are your friends? Certainly I have never observed that you received any one with special warmth."

"I have told you before that I consider as friends those whom I associate with oftenest, from whom I gain either profit or pleasure. I dare say! Would you have me feed them for nothing?"

"But I thought before your marriage you would take leave of your true friends, whom you love from your heart, with whom you would talk for the last time of your gay youth over the wine-cup, and whom, perhaps, you would press warmly to your heart on your separation."

"There, five of your words contain nothing that exists, or at least ought to exist, in life. With what transports your aunt would have thrown herself on your neck! Of course there are 'true friends' wherever there is simply friendship and a 'wine cup' whenever one is drinking out of bottles

and glasses, and embraces on separation when there is no separation at all. Oh, Alexandr!"

"Don't you feel regret at being separated, or at least seeing less of these friends?" said Alexandr.

"No! I never was so intimate with any one as to regret them, and I advise you to follow my example."

"So you will be here to-morrow?"

"To-morrow, uncle, I——"

"What?"

"I am invited to a country-house."

"The Lubetzkys, I suppose."

"Yes!"

"Ah! well, as you like. Don't forget your work, Alexandr; I shall tell the editor how you are spending your time."

"Oh, uncle, how can you! I will finish my abstract from the German economists without fail."

"First you had better read them. See, remember, don't come to me for 'contemptible money' as soon as you have quite given yourself up to 'soft emotions.'"

## CHAPTER IV

ALEXANDR'S life was divided into two halves. His official duties consumed the morning. He burrowed about in dusty deeds, pondered over facts in no way concerning himself, and reckoned on paper millions of money that did not belong to him. But at times his head refused to think for others, the pen dropped out of his hand and he was possessed by the "soft emotions" which made Piotr Ivanitch so angry.

Then Alexandr leant over the back of his chair and was carried in thought to a grassy peaceful place, where there were no papers, nor ink, nor strange faces, nor uniforms, where peace, sweetness, and freshness reigned, where in the luxurious drawing-room there was the sweet scent of flowers, and the sounds of a piano and a parrot hopping in his cage, and in the garden the waving branches of birch-trees and bushes of lilac. And the queen of all this—*She*.

In the morning, Alexandr, while he sat in his office, was present unseen in one of the islands, in the country villa of the Lubetzky's, but in the evening he was present visibly in his tangible person. Let us cast an indiscreet glance at his happiness.

It was a hot day, one of the few in Petersburg ; the sun, which gave life to the fields, seemed to kill the streets in Petersburg, made the granite red-hot with its rays, and the rays, reflected from the stone, scorched the people. The people walked slowly, hanging their heads, the dogs with their tongues lolling out. The town was like one of those towns of story, in which everything has changed to stone at some magician's sign. No carriages rattled on the flags ; the windows were covered with awnings like eyelids closed over eyes ; the wooden pavement polished like parquet ; it burnt the foot to step on it. All around was weary, asleep.

The pedestrian wiping the sweat from his face made for the shade. Stage coaches with six passengers slowly crawled into the town, scarcely stirring up the dust after them. At four o'clock the government clerks came out from their offices and slowly plodded off to their homes.

Alexandr rushed out, as though the roof of the house was falling in, looked at his watch—it was late ; he would not be in time for dinner. He flung himself into a restaurant.

“What have you got, quick !”

“Soup julienne and à la reine ; sauce à la provençale, à la maître d'hôtel ; roast turkey, game, &c., sweet soufflé.”

“Well, soup à la provençale, sauce julienne, and roast soufflé, only be quick !”

The waiter looked at him.

“Well, what is it ?” said Alexandr, impatiently.

The man hurried off and gave him what he thought fit. Adouev seemed very content. He did not wait for a quarter of the dishes and hurried off to a wharf of the Neva, and here a boat and two boatmen awaited him.

Within an hour he was in sight of the place of his hopes ; he stood up in the boat and bent his gaze on the distance. At first his eye was dimmed with anxiety and uneasiness, which passed into doubt. Then suddenly his face brightened with the light of happiness, like a beam of sunlight. He

distinguished a well-known dress at the garden fence ; then he was recognised, a handkerchief was waved to him. He had been waited for perhaps a long time. His feet seemed burning with impatience.

"Ah ! if only one could walk on the water !" thought Alexandr ; "they invent all sorts of silly things, and they don't invent that !" The boatmen plied the oars slowly, evenly like a machine. The sweat stood in drops on their sunburnt faces ; it was nothing to them that Alexandr's heart was leaping within him, that never taking his eyes from one point, he had already twice in his absorption moved first one leg and then the other up to the very edge of the boat ; but they did not care ; they went on rowing with the same phlegm, now and then wiping their faces with their sleeves.

"Quicker !" he said—"half a rouble for vodka !"

How they set to work, how they began to rise from their seats ! What had become of their fatigue ? how had they regained strength ? The oars seemed only to tremble in the water. The boat shot along, twenty yards in no time ! Ten strokes more, and the stern had already described an arc, the boat came up gracefully and turned into the very bank—Alexandr and Nadinka smiled from afar off and did not take their eyes off one another. Adouev leaped out with one foot in the water instead of on the bank, Nadinka laughed.

"Gently, sir, wait till I give you a hand," said one of the boatmen when Alexandr was already on the bank.

"Wait for me here," Adouev said to them, and ran to Nadinka.

She smiled tenderly at Alexandr from the distance. With every movement of the boat to the shore, her bosom heaved.

"Nadyezhda Alexandrovna !" said Adouev, almost breathless with delight.

"Alexandr Fedoritch !" she replied.  
Involuntarily they rushed towards each other, then stopped short, and looked at one another with a smile and moist eyes, and could not say a word. A few minutes passed thus.

Piotr Ivanitch could not be blamed for not having noticed Nadinka the first time of seeing her. She was not a beauty, and did not attract attention at once.

But if any one looked attentively at her features, he would not readily take his eyes off her. Her face rarely remained at rest for two minutes together. The thoughts and emotions of a nature impressionable and susceptible to excess, incessantly replaced one another, and the reflections of these emotions played, curiously mingled on her face, giving it every minute a fresh and unexpected expression. Her eyes, for instance, would flash like lightning, glow and suddenly be hidden under their delicate lids ; her face would grow lifeless and motionless, and she would turn to a marble statue before your eyes. You would expect immediately after again the same piercing brillance—not at all ! the eyelids would lift softly, and you would meet the mild light of eyes which seemed swimming in the splendour of moonlight. The heart could not but be stirred to a slight throb at such a gaze. In her gestures it was just the same. There was much grace in them, but a grace hardly sylph-like. There was much of the untamed impulsiveness in it which Nature gives. She sometimes sat in a picturesque pose, then suddenly, at the bidding of some inward impulse, this artistic pose would be broken in upon by some unexpected and equally bewitching gesture. In her conversation the same unlooked-for turns ; now just criticism, now dreaminess and short answers, then a childish frolicsomeness, or subtle dissembling. Everything in her pointed to an ardent imagination, a wilful and inconstant heart. A much stronger man than Alexandr might have lost his heart over her, only a Piotr Ivanitch could have withstood her, but there are not many like him.

" You were waiting for me ! How happy I am !" said Alexandr.

" I waiting for you ? I never thought of it !" answered Nadinka, shaking her head :—" You know I am always in the garden."

" You are angry ? " he asked timidly.

" What for ? what an idea ! "

" Well, give me you little hand."

She gave him her hand, but he had scarcely touched it when she at once drew it away—and all at once changed completely. Her smile vanished, and on her face appeared something like vexation.

" What is that, are you drinking milk ? " he asked.

Nadinka had a cup in her hands and some sugar.

"I am having dinner," she answered.

"You are dining at six o'clock, and on milk?"

"Of course it is strange to you to look at milk after a luxurious dinner at your uncle's, but here we are in the country; we live simply."

She broke off some bits of sugar with her front teeth and drank the milk, making a delicate grimace with her lips.

"I didn't dine with my uncle; I declined yesterday," replied Adouev.

"How shameless you are! How can you tell such stories? Where have you been up till now?"

"I have been at the office all day up till four——"

"But now it is six. Don't tell fibs; confess, you were tempted by the dinner, by pleasant society? There you have been enjoying yourself very, very much."

"On my word of honour, I haven't been to my uncle's." Alexandr began to defend himself with warmth. "If I had, could I be here with you by now?"

"Oh! does it seem so early to you? you might have come here two hours ago!" said Nadinka, and all at once, with a quick pirouette, turned away from him and went along the little path towards the house: Alexandr was after her.

"Don't come near me, don't come near me," she said, shaking her hand; "I can't see you——"

"Leave off teasing, Nadyezhda Alexandrovna."

"I am not teasing at all. Tell me, where have you been up till now?"

"At four o'clock I got out of the office," began Alexandr; "I was an hour coming here——"

"Then it ought to be five, but it is now six. Where were you that hour? you see what stories you tell!"

"I had dinner at a restaurant as quick as possible."

"As quick as possible! only one hour!" she said. "Poor fellow! you must be hungry. Don't you want some milk?"

"Oh, let me, let me have that cup," began Alexandr, holding out his hand.

But she stopped short all at once, turned the cup upside down, and paying no attention to Alexandr, looked with

curiosity at the last drops trickling out of the cup on to the dust.

" You are pitiless ! " he said. " How can you torment me so ? "

" Look, look, Alexandr Fedovitch," Nadinka suddenly interposed, absorbed in her occupation. " Shall I make a drop fall on the little beetle that is crawling here on the path ? . . . Ah ! it has fallen ! Poor little thing, it will die ! " she said ; then carefully picking up the beetle, and laying it on the palm of her hand she began to breathe on it.

" What care you take of a beetle ! " said Alexandr in vexation.

" Poor little thing ! look, it will die," said Nadinka, in distress. " What have I done ? "

She carried the beetle a little while in her palm, and when it began to stir and to crawl about on her hand Nadinka gave a shudder, quickly threw it on the ground, and stamped on it, saying, " horrid little beetle ! "

" Where have you been ? " she asked then.

" Why, I told you——"

" Oh, yes, at your uncle's. Were there many people ? Did you have any champagne ? Even from here I notice how you smell of champagne."

" Oh no, not at my uncle's," interrupted Alexandr in despair. " Who told you so ? "

" You just said so."

" Why, I should think they are only just sitting down to his dinner. You don't know those dinner parties ; would such a dinner be over in one hour ? "

" You have been dining for two hours—four till six."

" When was I coming here then ? "

She made no answer, but jumped up and picked a spray of acacia, then began to run along the path.

Adouev after her.

" Where are you going ? " he asked.

" Where ? What a question ! To mamma."

" Why ? Very likely we shall disturb her."

" Oh no, not at all."

Maria Mihalovna, the mother of Nadyezhda Alexandrovna, was one of those indulgent and simple mothers who think everything good that their children do. Maria

Mihalovna, for instance, would order the carriage to be got ready.

"What for, mamma?" Nadinka would inquire.

"We will go out for a drive, it's such glorious weather," said her mother.

"How can we? Alexandr Fedoritch is coming."

And the carriage would be put off.

Another time Maria Mihalovna would be sitting at work at her everlasting scarf and beginning to sigh, or be sniffing snuff and plying her bone knitting-needles, or else buried in the perusal of a French novel.

"*Maman*, why are you not dressing?" Nadinka would ask severely.

"What for?"

"Why, we are going for a walk, of course."

"For a walk?"

"Yes. Alexandr Fedoritch will come after us. Have you forgotten already?"

"Why, I didn't know."

"Not know indeed!" Nadinka would say in displeasure.

Her mother would leave her scarf and her book, and go to dress. So Nadinka enjoyed complete freedom and ordered herself and her mamma and her time and her occupations as she pleased. However, she was a kind and indulgent daughter—obedient one could not call her, for it was not she, but her mother, who obeyed; but at least one could say that she had an obedient mother.

"Go in to mamma," said Nadinka, when they had reached the door of the drawing-room.

"And you?"

"I will come afterwards."

"Well, then, I will come afterwards too."

"No, go in first."

Alexandr went in and at once retreated again on tip-toe.

"She is asleep in the armchair," he said in a whisper.

"Never mind, go in. *Maman, maman!*"

"Ah!"

"Alexandr Fedoritch has come."

"Ah!"

"Mr. Adouev wants to see you."

"Ah!"

" You see how sound asleep she is. Don't wake her ! " Alexandr restrained her.

" No, I will wake her. *Maman !*"

" Ah ! "

" Wake up ; Alexandr Fedoritch is here."

" Where is Alexandr Fedoritch ? " said Maria Mihalovna, looking directly at him and setting straight her cap, which had fallen on one side. " Ah, is that you, Alexandr Fedoritch ? Glad to see you. Here have I been sitting and dropping off into a nap. I'm sure I don't know why, I suppose it's the weather. My corns too begin to shoot—there will be rain. I've been dozing, and in my sleep I thought that Ignaty announced some visitors, but I did not understand who. I listen, " are here," he says, but who I couldn't make out. Then Nadinka called and I woke up at once. I sleep very lightly ; the least sound and I'm looking to see what it is. Sit down, Alexandr Fedoritch, how are you ? "

" Very well, thank you."

" How is Piotr Ivanitch ? "

" Very well, I thank you."

" Why does he never come to see us ? I was only thinking yesterday ; he might, thought I, come over once sometime, but he never has—I suppose he is busy ? "

" Very busy," said Alexandr.

" And we didn't see you the other day ! " continued Maria Mihalovna. " I had been awake a long while ; I asked, where is Nadinka ? They tell me she's still asleep. " Well, let her sleep," I said, the whole day in the open air, in the garden, the weather keeps fine, she's tired. At her age she sleeps soundly, not as I do at my time of life ; such sleeplessness—would you believe—it grows quite a torment ; my nerves, or something, I don't know. Then they bring me coffee ; you know I always drink it in bed—and while I was drinking it, I thought : " what does it mean, we've seen nothing of Alexandr Fedoritch ? Can he be well ? " Then I got up, and I look ; it's eleven o'clock—a pretty thing, on my word—the servants never told me. I went into Nadinka. She was still asleep. I woke her. " It's time, upon my word, my dear ; it's nearly twelve o'clock, what's the matter with you ? " You know I am after her the whole day like a nurse. I sent away the governess on purpose to

have no strangers about. Trust strangers, they say, and God knows what they will do ! No ! I undertook her education myself. I look after her strictly, she's never a step out of my sight, and I can say that Nadinka feels this ; she doesn't even keep a thought secret from me. I seem to see right through her. Then the cook came up ; I talked to him for an hour ; then I read a little of the " Mémoires du Diable . . . ah ! what a pleasant author Sully is ! how agreeably he writes ! Then our neighbour Maria Ivanovna called with her husband ; so I never noticed how the morning slipped away ; four o'clock already and time for dinner ! Ah, yes ; why didn't you come to dinner ? we waited for you till five o'clock."

"Till five o'clock ?" said Alexandr : "I never can, Maria Mihalovna ; my office work kept me. I beg you never to wait for me after four o'clock."

"Well, I said the same, but Nadinka kept on 'let us wait a little longer, and a little longer !'"

"I ? Oh, mamma, how you talk ! Didn't I say, 'It's time for dinner, mamma,' and you said 'No, we must wait ; Alexandr Fedoritch can't be far off ; certainly he will be here to dinner.'"

"There, there !" said Maria Mihalovna, shaking her head ; "oh, she's a shameless girl ! she puts her own words into my mouth !"

Nadinka turned away, walked to the flowers and began to tease the parrot.

"I said, 'Well, where can Alexandr Fedoritch be now ?'" continued Maria Mihalovna "it's half-past four. 'No,' she said, 'we must wait, *maman*, he will be here.' I look again, a quarter to five. 'You may say what you like, Nadinka,' said I ; 'Alexandr Fedoritch has certainly gone to some friends, he will not come ; I am getting hungry.' 'No,' she said, 'we must wait till five o'clock.' So she plagued me. Eh, isn't it true, miss ?"

"Popka, popka !" was heard from behind the flowers ; "where did you dine to-day, at your uncle's ?"

"What ; she has hidden herself !" her mother went on ; "you see she's ashamed to face the light of day."

"Not at all," answered Nadinka, coming from the flowers, and sitting down at the window.

"And after all she wouldn't sit down to the table !" said

Maria Mihalovna: "she asked for a cup of milk and went into the garden; so she has had no dinner. What? look me straight in the face, miss!"

Alexandr nearly fainted with happiness at this narrative. He looked at Nadinka, but she had turned her back on him and was tearing a leaf of ivy into little pieces.

"Nadyezhda Alexandrovna!" he said, "had I the happiness of being thought of by you?"

"Don't come near me!" she cried, in vexation that her manœuvres had been revealed. "Mamma is joking, and you are ready to believe her."

"But where are the berries that you had got ready for Alexandr Fedoritch?" asked her mother.

"Berries?"

"Yes, the berries."

"Why, you ate them at dinner," answered Nadinka.

"I! please to remember, my dear, you hid them and would not give me any. 'You will see,' she said, 'Alexandr Fedoritch will come, and then I will give you some too.' What do you think of her?"

Alexandr looked shyly and tenderly at Nadinka. She blushed.

"She picked them herself, Alexandr Fedoritch," remarked her mother.

"What is all this you are inventing, *maman*? I picked two or three berries, and you ate those yourself, and the rest Vassilisa——"

"Don't believe her, don't believe her, Alexandr Fedoritch; Vassilisa has been in the town since the morning. Why make a secret of it? I'm sure Alexandr Fedoritch will like them all the better for you're having picked them, and not Vassilisa."

Nadinka smiled, then disappeared again behind the flowers and appeared with a plate full of berries. She held out the plate to Alexandr. He kissed her hand and took the berries, feeling as if he had received a marshal's baton.

"You don't deserve them! to keep us waiting so long for you!" said Nadinka: "I stood for two hours at the trellis; only imagine! some one came along; I thought it was you and waved my handkerchief, and saw all at once it was a stranger, some officer. And he waved back, impudent wretch!" .

In the evening guests arrived and went away again. It began to be dusk. The ladies of the house and Adouev were left again alone together. By degrees this trio too broke up. Nadinka went into the garden. Then an unequal duet was kept up between Maria Mihalovna and Adouev; she chatted at great length of what she had done yesterday and to-day and what she was going to do to-morrow. He became a prey to insufferable boredom and restlessness. The evening would soon be here, and he had not yet had an opportunity of saying a word to Nadinka by herself. The cook came to his rescue; the benefactor came in to inquire what to prepare for supper, and Adouev was more breathless with impatience than he had been before in the boat. They had scarcely begun to discuss cutlets, a dish of curds, when Alexandr began to beat a skilful retreat. How many manœuvres he employed only to get away from Maria Mihalovna's armchair! To begin with, he walked to the window and looked out into the court. Then with slow steps hardly able to restrain himself from running away at his utmost speed, he walked away to the piano, touched the keys here and there, took with feverish tremulousness some music from the desk, looked at it and laid it back: he even had the self-possession to sniff two flowers and wake up the parrot. Then he reached the utmost pitch of impatience; the door was near, but to go out of it in any way seemed awkward—he had to stand still for two minutes and walk out as though casually. And the cook had already made two steps in retreat, another word more—she would be gone, and then Madame Lubetzky would be certain to turn to him. Alexandr could hold out no longer, and gliding like a snake out of the door, and jumping down the whole flight of steps without touching them, in a few strides he was at the end of the avenue—on the bank, near Nadinka.

"You remembered me at last!" she said then with mild reproach.

"Ah, what torture I have been enduring," replied Alexandr; "and you did not help me!"

Nadinka showed him a book.

"That's what I would have called you out for, if you had not come in another minute," she said.

"Sit down, *maman* will not come out now; she is afraid

of the damp. I have so much, so much I want to say to you. . . . ah!"

"And I too . . . ah!"

And they said nothing or almost nothing, something or other they had talked of ten times before. Usually something like dreams, the sky, the stars, sympathy, happiness. Their conversation made more progress in the language of looks, smiles, and ejaculations. The book lay neglected on the grass.

Night came on—or rather no, for what a night! Are there such nights in Petersburg in summer? It was not night; one ought to have some other name for it—as half-light. Everything around was at peace. The Neva seemed asleep; sometimes, as though in sleep, it splashed in a slight ripple on the bank and then sank into silence. And then from somewhere came a belated breeze, and was wafted over the slumbering waters but could not waken them, and only rippled the surface and fanned a little freshness on to Nadinka and Alexandr, or brought them the sound of singing far away—and again all was silent, and again the Neva was motionless, like a man asleep who at some slight sound opens his eyes for a minute and at once shuts them again; and sleep settles all the heavier on his eyelids. Then from the direction of the bridge is heard as it were distant thunder and immediately after the barking of the watch-dog from the angling place near, and again all was still. The trees formed a dark dome above, and scarcely and noiselessly waved their branches. The lights at the villas twinkled along the banks.

What is the special charm that haunts the warm air on such nights? What is the secret wafted from flowers, from trees, from the grass, and floating with such inexplicable tenderness into the soul? Why are the thoughts, the emotions conceived within the soul then quite other than those conceived among noise, among one's fellows? But what a moment for love in this slumber of nature, in darkness, among the silent trees, the sweet breathed flowers and solitude! How powerfully it all attunes the soul to reveries, the heart to these rare emotions, which in the ordinary, regular stern realities of life seem such profitless, injudicious and ridiculous irregularities . . . yes! profitless, and yet at these instants only the soul dimly apprehends the possibility

of a happiness which at other times it seeks so zealously and never attains.

Alexandr and Nadinka walked up to the river and leaned on the fence. Nadinka gazed long at the Neva, into the distance deep in thought, Alexandr gazed at Nadinka. Their souls were filled full of happiness, their hearts of a sweet and yet painful ache, but the tongue was silent.

Alexandr gently touched her waist. She gently pushed away his hand with her elbow. He touched her again, she repelled him more feebly, not taking her eyes from the Neva. The third time she did not repell him.

He took her by the hand—she did not take away her hand ; he pressed it ; the hand answered his pressure. So they stood in silence ; but what were they feeling !

“Nadinka !” he said softly.

She was silent.

Alexandr bent over her, his heart swooning with rapture. She felt his burning breath on her cheek, shivered, turned away and—did not run away in righteous indignation, did not scream ! She had not the force to dissemble and run away ; the power of love kept reason silent, and when Alexandr’s lips fastened on hers, she answered his kiss, though weakly, scarcely perceptibly.

“Oh, how happy man may be !” said Alexandr to himself, and again bent over her lips and stayed so for some seconds.

She stood pale, motionless, tears glittering on her eyelashes, her bosom panting violently and convulsively.

“It is like a dream !” murmured Alexandr. Suddenly Nadinka started, the minute of oblivion had passed.

“What does this mean ? you have forgotten yourself,” she said, flinging herself a few steps away from him. “I will tell mamma !”

Alexandr fell from heaven.

“Nadyezhda Alexandrovna, don’t destroy my happiness with reproaches,” he began ; “don’t be like——”

She looked at him and all at once laughed aloud, gaily, went up to him again, and again stood at the fence and confidently leaned her hands and her head on his shoulder.

“So you love me so much ?” she asked, wiping away a tear that had fallen on her cheek.

Alexandr made an indescribable motion of the shoulders.

In silence they looked as before at the water and at the sky and at the distance, as though nothing had passed between them. Only they were afraid to look at one another ; at last they looked, smiled, and at once turned away again.

"Can there be sorrow in the world ?" said Nadinka, after a pause.

"They say there is," replied Adouev, thoughtfully, "but I don't believe it."

"What sorrow can there be?"

"Uncle says—poverty."

"Poverty ! do the poor not feel as we do now ; if they do, they are not poor."

"Uncle says that it's not so with them—they want to eat and drink."

"Ugh ! eat ! Your uncle does not tell the truth ; they may be happy without that ; I have had no dinner to-day, but how happy I am !"

He laughed.

"Ah, at this minute I would give everything to the poor, yes, everything !" Nadinka went on, "only let the poor come. Ah ! why can I not comfort and delight every one with pleasure of some kind ?"

"Angel, angel !" Alexandr uttered rapturously, pressing her hand.

"Oh, how horribly you pinch me !" Nadinka interrupted suddenly, frowning and taking away her hand.

But he seized the hand again and began to kiss it with warmth.

"How I will pray," she continued, "to-day, to-morrow, always, in thankfulness for this evening. How happy I am ! And you ?"

Suddenly she grew thoughtful ; there was a gleam of fear in her eyes.

"Do you know," she said, "they say that what has been once can never return again ! Can it be that this minute will never return ?"

"Oh, no," answered Alexandr, "it is not true ; it will return ! there will be happier minutes still ; yes, I feel it !"

She shook her head incredulously. And his uncle's lessons came into his head, and he came to a pause suddenly.

"No," he said to himself, "no, that can never be! uncle knew nothing of such happiness, that is why he is so stern and suspicious with people. Poor fellow! I am sorry for his dry, cold heart: it has never known the intoxication of love; of course that's the reason of his jaundiced railings against life. God forgive him! If he had seen my bliss, even he would not have tried to destroy it, he would not have insulted it by his impure doubts. I am sorry for him."

"No, Nadinka, no, we will be happy!" he went on aloud. "Look round; are not all things here rejoicing looking on at our love? God Himself blesses it. How gaily we shall go through life hand in hand! We shall be *proud, great in mutual love!*"

"Oh, stop, stop looking forward!" she interposed. "Don't prophesy; I begin to be afraid when you talk so. And now I feel sad."

"What are you afraid of? Cannot you believe in yourself?"

"No, I can't, I can't!" she said, shaking her head. He looked at her and grew thoughtful.

"Why?" he began again, "what can destroy this world of our happiness? Who can interfere with us? We will always be alone, we will withdraw ourselves from others; what have we to do with them? and what have they to do with us? They will not remember us, they will forget us, and then the rumours of sorrow and troubles will not trouble us, just as now here in the garden no sound disturbs the heavenly peace."

"Nadinka! Alexandr Fedoritch!" was suddenly heard from the steps, "where are you?"

"Listen!" said Nadinka in prophetic tones, "it's an omen of fate; this minute will not return again—I feel it."

She seized his hand, squeezed it and looked at him somewhat strangely, mournfully, and suddenly rushed off into the dark avenue.

He stood alone musing.

"Alexandr Fedoritch!" sounded again from the steps, "the curds have been on the table a long while."

He shrugged his shoulders and went into the room.

"At the instant of ineffable bliss—all of a sudden

curds!!" he said to Nadinka, "Will it be always so in life?"

"I only hope it won't be worse," she answered gaily; "curds are a very nice thing, especially for any one who has had no dinner."

Her happiness animated her. Her cheeks glowed, her eyes flashed with unwonted brilliance. How zealously she played the hostess, how gaily she chatted! There was not a shadow left of the momentary glimpse of sadness.

The dawn was already filling half the heavens with light when Adouev took his seat in the boat. The boatmen in expectation of the promised reward, spit into their hands and were beginning to rise from their seats as before, plying the oars with all their might.

"Go slower!" said Alexandr, "another half rouble for vodka!"

They looked at him and then at one another. One scratched his throat, the other his back, and they began to row, scarcely moving the oars, hardly touching the water. The boat swam on like a swan.

"And uncle wants to convince me that happiness is a chimæra, that one cannot believe unreservedly in anything, that life—he is too bad! Why does he want to deceive me so cruelly? No, this is life! So I imagined it to myself, so it must be, so it is, and so it shall be! Otherwise it is not life!"

A soft morning breeze was lightly blowing from the north. Alexandr gave a little shiver, from the breeze and from his memories, then yawned and, wrapping himself in his coat, fell into reverie.

## CHAPTER V.

ADOUEV had reached the zenith of his happiness. He had nothing more to wish for. His official duties, his journalistic work were all forgotten and thrown aside. They had already passed him over at his office; he would not have noticed it at all, except that his uncle reminded him of

the fact. Piotr Ivanitch advised him to give up trifling, but Alexandr at the word "trifling" shrugged his shoulders, smiled compassionately and said nothing. His uncle, seeing that his representations were useless, also shrugged his shoulders, smiled compassionately and said nothing.

Alexandr obviously avoided him. He had lost all kind of trust in his gloomy prognostications, and feared his cold views of love in general and his offensive insinuations as to his relations with Nadinka in especial.

There was something of triumph, of mystery in Alexandr's deportment, his glance, his whole bearing. He behaved with other people, like some rich capitalist on Exchange with petty tradesmen, condescendingly, with consideration, thinking to himself, "poor creatures! which of you is master of a treasure like mine? which of you can feel like me? whose mighty soul——" and so on.

He was convinced that he was the only person in the world who so loved and was so loved. However, he not only avoided his uncle, but all the "herd" as he said. He was either worshipping his divinity, or sitting at home in his study alone, brooding over his bliss, analysing it, dissecting it to infinity. He called this *creating a world of his own*, and sitting in solitude he certainly did create for himself a world of some kind out of nothing and lived for the most part in it, and he went to his office rarely and reluctantly, calling it—"a miserable necessity."

Behold him sitting in his armchair! Before him some sheets of paper, on which were carelessly jotted a few lines of poetry. He is either bending over the manuscript, making some correction or adding a few lines, or doubled up in the depths of his armchair dreaming. On his lips a smile is playing; it is clear that it is not long since they tasted the full "cup" of bliss.

All around is still. Only in the distance from the great street is heard the rumbling of carriages, and from time to time Yevsay, weary of cleaning shoes, talking aloud to himself: "mus'n't forget; borrowed a ha'porth of vinegar some time ago at the shop and a penn'orth of cabbage, must pay it to-morrow, or the man, maybe, won't trust me again—such a cur as he is! Sell bread by the pound—like the famine year—it's a shame! Oh, Lord, I'm tired! There, I'll just

finish that boot—and then to bed. At Grahae they've been abed this long time, no doubt ; it's very different from here ! When will the Lord grant I see——”

Here he gave a loud sigh, breathed on the boot, and began again to polish it with the brush. He considered this occupation a most important one, and almost his sole duty, and measured the value of a servant and even of a man principally by his skill in cleaning boots ; he cleaned them himself with a kind of passionate ardour. “Do stop, Yevsay ! you prevent me doing my work with your fooling !” cried Adouev.

“ Fooling !” Yevsay muttered to himself ; “ it's not I but you that are fooling, and I am doing work. Just see how he's muddled his boots, one can scarcely get them clean.” He put the boots on the table and looked lovingly at the brilliant polish on the leather.

“ Get along ! polishing like that fooling !” he added.

Alexandr grew always more deeply buried in his dreams of Nadinka and then in his dreams of authorship.

There was nothing on the table. Everything which recalled his former occupations, his office duties, his journalistic work, lay under the table or in the cupboard or under the bed. “ The very sight of such sordid things,” he said, “ frightens the creative impulse, and it takes flight like the nightingale from a thicket, at the sudden creaking of grating wheels on the road.”

Often the dawn found him over some lyric. Every hour not spent at the Lubetzkys was devoted to composition. He wrote poetry and read it to Nadinka ; she would copy it out on superfine paper and learn it by heart, and he experienced “ the poet's highest bliss—hearing his own creations from beloved lips.”

“ You are my muse,” he said to her ; “ be the Vesta of the sacred fire which burns within my breast ; if you abandon it, it will die out.”

Then he sent verses under *noms-de-plume* to the magazines. They printed them because they were not bad, in parts not without force, and all animated by ardent feeling, and the style was good.

Nadinka was proud of his love and called him “ my poet.”

“ Yes, yours, yours for ever,” he added. Fame seemed

to smile before him, and Nadinka, he thought, would twine him the laurels to crown his brow, and then . . . "Life, life, how fair a thing thou art!" he exclaimed. "And my uncle? He would destroy, he would corrupt my loving heart, he would pervert it."

And he avoided his uncle, did not go to see him for whole weeks, then months. And if when they did meet, the conversation turned on matters of feeling, he kept a contemptuous silence or listened like a man whose convictions cannot be shaken by any arguments. He considered his judgments infallible, his feelings and opinions unsuitable, and decided in future to be guided only by them, declaring that he was no longer a boy and why should he be bound by the opinions of others, and so on.

But his uncle was always the same; he never asked his nephew about anything and did not or would not notice his whims. He was as cordial with him as before, and lightly reproached him for coming so rarely to see him.

"My wife is angry with you," he said: "she was accustomed to regard you as a relation: we dine every day at home; you must come in."

But Alexandr rarely went in, for he had no time; in the morning at the office, after dinner till night at the Lubetzkys; night came, and at night he entered the "world of his own" he had created, and continued to create there. And besides it did him no harm to sleep a little sometimes.

In prose composition he was less happy. He wrote a play, two novels, some sketches and travels. His activity was amazing, the paper seemed to burn under his pen. His play and one of his novels he showed at first to his uncle and asked him to say whether they would do. His uncle read a few pages at random and handed it back, writing above—"It will do to light the fire!"

Alexandr was furious and sent them to the magazines, but they returned him both of them. In two places on the margin of the play was noted in pencil "not bad," and that was all. On the novel the following criticisms were often to be met with: "weak, untrue, unreal, tedious, not worked out" and so on, and at the end it was said "there is noticeable throughout an ignorance of the heart, an excess of fervour, unreality, everything stilted, no real human being in it—the hero is a monstrosity—such people don't exist—

unsuitable for publication ! However, the author is not without ability ; he must work ! ”

“ Such people don’t exist ! ” thought Alexandr, mortified and surprised—“ not exist ? but I am myself the hero. Can I describe the common heroes whom one meets at every turn, who think and feel like the herd and do what every one else does—the pitiful characters in small everyday tragedies and comedies, not distinguished by any special stamp—is art to stoop to that ? . . . .

He invoked the shade of Byron, he called on Goethe and Schiller to confirm the truth of the literary doctrines he professed. He considered that a hero fit for a drama or a novel could be nothing else than some corsair, or great poet or artist, and he made them act and feel accordingly.

In one novel he laid the scene of the action in America ; the *mise en scène* was extravagant ; American scenery, mountains, and in the midst of all this an exile who had borne away with him his beloved. The whole world had forgotten them ; they loved each other and nature, and when tidings were brought them of pardon and the possibility of returning to their native land, they refused. Twenty years after a European arrived there, came with an escort of Indians to hunt and found on a mountain a hut and in it skeletons. The European was the hero’s rival. How beautiful this story seemed to him ! with what delight he read it to Nadinka in the winter evenings ! How eagerly she listened to him !—and to think of not taking such a novel !

Of this failure he did not speak to Nadinka ; he swallowed the outrage in silence—and that was the end of it. With a sigh he laid aside literary prose for some future time ; when his heart should be beating more evenly, his thoughts would be more in order, then he promised himself to set to work properly.

Day after day passed by, days of uninterrupted blissfulness for Alexandr. He was happy when he kissed the end of Nadinka’s little finger, sat opposite her in a picturesque attitude for two hours at a stretch, not taking his eyes off her, sighing and melting with tenderness, or declaiming verses appropriate to the occasion.

Truth compels one to state that she sometimes met his sighs and verses with a yawn. And no wonder ; her heart

was employed, but her mind remained quite unoccupied. Alexandr never exerted himself to give it food. The year fixed for their probation by Nadinka had passed. She was living again with her mother at the same country villa, Alexandr began to speak to her of her promise, and begged permission to speak to her mother. Nadinka would have put it off till their return to town, but Alexandr insisted.

At last, at parting one evening, she gave Alexandr leave to speak to her mother the following day.

Alexandr did not sleep the whole night, and did not go to his duties. He kept revolving the next day in his head ; he thought of everything he would say to Maria Mihalovna ; he was composing his speech and preparing himself, but as soon as he recalled that it was Nadinka's hand that was in question, he was lost in dreams and again forgot everything. So he arrived at the house in the evening without having prepared anything ; but it was not needed ; Nadinka met him as usual in the garden, but with a slight shade of pensiveness in her eyes, without a smile, and with a somewhat preoccupied air.

"You can't speak to mamma now," she said ; "that horrid Count is indoors."

"Count ! what Count ?"

"Why, don't you know what Count ! Count Novinsky of course—our neighbour ; that is his villa ; how many times you have admired his garden !"

"Count Novinsky ! calling on you !" said Alexander, surprised ; "how did it happen ?"

"I don't know very well myself" answered Nadinka. I was sitting here and reading your book and mamma wasn't at home ; she had gone to Maria Ivanovna. Then it begun to rain a little, I went indoors, all at once a carriage drove up, dove-coloured with white cushions, the same that is always driving by us—you admired it once. I look out and see mamma stepping out with a man. They came in ; and mamma said, "Here, Count, this is my daughter ; let me introduce you." He bowed, and so did I. I felt shy, I grew red and ran away to my room. But mamma—so horrible of her—I heard saying, 'Excuse her, Count, she is such a wild thing'. . . . So I guessed that it must be our neighbour Count Novinsky. I suppose he brought mamma in his carriage from Maria Ivanovna's, because of the rain."

"Is he—an old man!" asked Alexandr.

"An old man! what an idea! he's young, good-looking!"

"You had time then to see he was good-looking!" said Alexandr with annoyance.

"That's good! does it take long to look at any one? I just spoke to him. Ah! he is very polite; he asked what I do; talked of music; asked me to sing something, but I didn't; I really can't sing a bit; next winter I shall certainly ask mamma to get me a good teacher of singing. The Count says it's all the fashion now, singing." All this was uttered with great vivacity.

"I thought, Nadyezhda Alexandrovna," observed Alexandr, "that next winter you would have other occupations besides singing."

"What occupation?"

"What!" said Alexandr reproachfully.

"Ah, yes—did you come by boat?"

He looked at her without speaking. She turned away and went into the house.

Adouev went into the drawing-room not altogether easy in his mind. What kind of man might the Count be? How should he behave to him? what would his manner be like—proud, or nonchalant? He went in. The Count rose first and bowed politely. Alexandr replied by a stiff and awkward bow. Their hostess introduced them. The Count, for some reason, did not please him, but he was a handsome man—tall, well-made, fair, with large expressive eyes, and a pleasant smile. His manners were marked by simplicity, refinement, and a kind of softness. He seemed likely to attract everyone, but he did not attract Adouev.

Alexandr, in spite of Maria Mihalovna's invitation to sit nearer, sat in a corner and kept reading a book, which was ill-bred, awkward, and injudicious.

Nadinka stood behind her mother's armchair, looked with curiosity at the Count and listened to what he said; he was a novelty for her.

Adouev did not know how to conceal, that he did not like the Count. The Count did not seem to notice his rudeness; he was civil and turned to Adouev, trying to make the conversation general. But it was all in vain; he was silent, or answered yes and no.

When Madame Lubetzky happened to mention his surname, the Count asked whether he was related to Piotr Ivanitch.

"My uncle!" replied Alexandr, briefly.

"I have often met him in society," said the Count.

"Very likely. What is there surprising in that?" answered Adouev, shrugging his shoulders.

The Count concealed a smile, biting his lower lip. Nadinka exchanged a look with her mother, crimsoned and dropped her eyes.

"Your uncle is an intelligent and agreeable man!" remarked the Count in a tone of slight irony.

Adouev did not answer.

Nadinka could not put up with it, she went up to Alexandr, and while the Count was speaking to her mother, whispered to him:

"Aren't you ashamed? the Count is so friendly to you, and you—"

"Friendly!" in his annoyance Alexandr answered almost aloud: "I don't want his friendship, don't say that again."

Nadinka darted away from him, and from a distance looked at him long and fixedly with wide-open eyes, then she took up her position again behind her mother's chair, and paid no further attention to Alexandr.

But Adouev kept expecting all the while that the Count would go, and that at last he would have a chance of speaking to her mother. But ten o'clock, eleven struck, the Count did not go, and kept talking.

All the subjects upon which conversation usually turns at the first stage of an acquaintanceship were exhausted. The Count began to make jokes. He did this cleverly; his jokes were not forced, affected, nor far-fetched; he had a power of interesting, a special aptitude for telling things humorously, so that not anecdotes only, but simply a piece of news, an incident, or a serious matter he would turn into comedy by a single unexpected word.

Both mother and daughter were heartily diverted by his sallies, and Alexandr himself hid more than once an involuntary smile behind his book. But he was raging inwardly.

The Count talked of everything equally well and with tact—of music, of people, and of foreign countries. The

conversation turned on men and women ; the Count was severe on men, himself among them, and subtly flattered women in general, paying a few compliments to the ladies of the house in particular.

Adouev thought of his literary pursuits, of his poetry. "There I should put him to shame," he thought. They began to converse upon literature ; the mother and daughter commended Alexandr as an author.

"That'll take him down!" thought Adouev.

Far from it. The Count talked of literature as though he were exclusively devoted to the subject ; he made a few just criticisms in passing on contemporary Russian and French writers of note. Further it appeared that he was on terms of friendship with the leading Russian literary men, and in Paris had been acquainted with several French celebrities also. A few he commented upon with appreciation, others he slightly caricatured.

Of Alexandr's verses he remarked that he did not know them, and had not heard of them.

Nadinka looked rather queerly at Adouev as though inquiring : "What does that mean, pray? You have not done much."

Alexandr's heart fell. His churlish and arrogant expression gave way to one of melancholy. He looked like a cock with bedraggled tail hiding from the storm under a shed.

Presently there was a clinking of knives and glasses on the sideboard, the table was set, but still the Count did not go. All hope vanished. He even accepted Madame Lubetzky's invitation to stay and have a supper of curds.

"A Count, and eat curds!" said Adouev, casting a glance of hatred on the Count.

The Count ate with appetite and continued to make jokes, as though he were at home.

"The first time he's in the house and eating enough for three, he's shameless!" whispered Alexandr to Nadinka.

"Why, he's *hungry!*" she answered simply.

The Count at last went away, but it was too late to talk of things then. Adouev took his hat and was hurrying off. Nadinka overtook him, and succeeded in pacifying him.

"Then to-morrow?" asked Alexandr.

"To-morrow we shan't be at home." ✓

"Well, the day after to-morrow then."

They parted.

The next time Alexandr arrived rather earlier. While still in the garden an unaccustomed sound reached him from indoors—a violoncello—no, not a violoncello. He drew nearer. A manly voice was singing—and what a voice! Sonorous, tender, a voice that one would think would penetrate a woman's heart. It penetrated Adouev's heart, but in a different way; it grew faint, it ached with anguish, envy, hatred, and a miserable undefined presentiment. Alexandr went from the courtyard into the hall.

"Who have you here?" he asked the servant.

"Count Novinsky."

"Has he been here long?"

"Since six o'clock."

"Tell your young lady that I have been and will come back again."

"Very well."

Alexandr went away and went wandering about the villas, not noticing where he was going. In two hours he returned.

"Well, is he still here?" he asked.

"Yes, and I think he will stay to supper. The mistress ordered roast woodcocks for supper."

"And did you give the young lady my message?"

"Yes."

"Well, what did she say?"

"She gave me no orders."

Alexandr went home and did not appear for two days. God knows what revolutions of thought and feeling he went through; at last he went again.

He came in sight of the villa, stood up in the boat and, shading his eyes from the sun with his hand, looked before him. Yonder between the trees he caught a glimpse of the blue dress which fitted Nadinka so well; and blue was the colour most becoming to her complexion. She always put on this dress when she wanted to please Alexandr specially. A load seemed lifted from his heart.

"Ah! she wants to make up to me for her past unintentional neglect," he thought; "it's not she, but I who am to blame; how could I behave so unforgivingly to her? that's only the way to set her against one; a stranger, a new

acquaintance ; it's very natural that she as hostess. . . .”  
“Ah ! here she comes out of the bushes from the narrow footpath, she is going to the trellis, there she will take her stand and wait for. . . .”

She did in fact go on into the great avenue . . . but who is turning with her from the path ?

“The Count ! ” Alexandr cried aloud in dismay, hardly believing his eyes.

“Eh ? ” ejaculated one of the boatmen.

“Alone in the garden with him,” muttered Alexandr—“just as with me.”

The Count and Nadinka walked up to the trellis, and not looking at the river, turned round and walked slowly back to the avenue. He was bending over her, saying something in a low voice. She hung her head as she walked.

Adouev remained in the boat, open-mouthed, motionless, stretching out his hands to the shore, then he let them drop and sank into his seat. The boatmen went on rowing.

“Where are you going ? ” Adouev screamed furiously at them, when he had recovered a little. “Back again.”

“Go back ? ” repeated one of them, gazing at him open-mouthed.

“Yes, back ; are you deaf ? ”

“But don't you want to go this way ? ”

The other boatman began at once without speaking to row with his left oar alone, then pulled vigorously with both, and the boat was quickly darting along homewards. Alexandr pulled his hat down almost on to his shoulders and sank into gloomy meditation.

After this he did not go to the Lubetzky's for a fortnight.

A whole fortnight : what an age for a lover ! But he kept expecting that they would send a servant to inquire what was the matter with him, whether he was ill, as this had always been done when he had been unwell, or perhaps had affected to be so. Nadinka at first would make such inquiries in her mother's name for form's sake, but afterwards, what did she not write on her own account ? Such tender reproaches, such fond anxiety ! such impatience !

“No, now I will not make it up at once,” thought Alexandr : “I will punish her. I will teach her how she

ought to behave with strange men ; the reconciliation shall not come too easily ! ”

And he pondered harsh plans of revenge, dreamed of repentance, of how he would magnanimously pardon and lay down principles for the future. But till no servant was sent to him, no confession was brought ; it seemed as though he no longer existed for the Lubetzkys.

He grew thin and white. Jealousy is more agonising than any disease, especially jealousy on suspicion without proof. When the proof is plain, then jealousy is at an end, and, for the most part, love itself as well ; then at least one knows what to do, but until then it is torture ! And Alexandre experienced it to the full.

At last he resolved to go in the morning, thinking he would find Nadinka alone and have an explanation with her.

He arrived. There was no one in the garden, no one in the drawing-room and the parlour. He went into the hall, opened the door into the court-yard.

What a spectacle met him there ! Two grooms, in the Count's livery, were holding saddle-horses. On to one of them the Count and a servant were mounting Nadinka ; the other stood ready for the Count himself. On the steps was standing Maria Mihalovna. She was looking on at this scene with a frown of anxiety.

“ Sit firmer, Nadinka,” she said, “ For Heaven's sake, Count, look at her ! Ah ! I'm frightened, hold on to the horse's ear, Nadinka ; you see what a wicked thing she is to coax me into it.”

“ Nonsense, *maman*, ” said Nadinka, gaily ; “ of course I can ride now—look.”

She switched the horse, which sprang forward and plunged and reared.

“ Ah, ah ! keep still ! ” shrieked Maria Mihalovna, waving her hand ; “ leave off, it'll be the death of you ! ”

But Nadinka pulled the curb and the horse stood still.

“ You see how she obeys me ! ” said Nadinka, stroking the horse's neck.

No one noticed Adouev. With a white face he looked at Nadinka without speaking, and as though in mockery of him, she had never looked so handsome as that moment. How well the hat with its green veil and the riding habit

became her! how well it defined her figure! Her face was animated by a shy pride and the delicious feeling of a new sensation. The colour came and went on her cheeks from delight. The horse plunged slightly and made the slender rider bow gracefully backwards and forwards. Her figure was shaken on the saddle like the stem of a flower quivering in the wind. Next the groom brought a horse up to the Count.

"Count! shall we go to the copse again?" asked Nadinka.

"Again!" thought Adouev.

"Very well," answered the Count.

The horses were just starting.

"Nadyezhda Alexandrovna!" cried Adouev, suddenly, in a strange voice.

All stood still, rooted to the ground, as though they had been changed to stone and looked in perplexity at Alexandr. This lasted for a minute.

"Ah! its Alexandr Fedoritch!" said the mother, the first to recover herself. The Count bowed affably. Nadinka quickly drew her veil back from her face, turned round and looked at him with dismay, her lips parted, then she swiftly turned her back, switched her horse, who dashed forward, and in two bounds had disappeared through the gates; the Count followed her.

"Gently, gently, for Heaven's sake, gently!" screamed the mother after them—"hold on! Ah! Lord have mercy on us! she'll be off to a certainty; what a frightful thing it is!"

And all was gone; only the sound of the horses' hoofs could be heard, and the dust was thrown up in a cloud from the road. Alexandr remained with Madame Lubetzky. He looked at her without speaking, as though asking her with his eyes, "What does this mean?" She did not keep him long waiting for an answer.

"They have gone," she said, "out of sight now! Well, let the young people amuse themselves, and I will have a little chat with you, Alexandr Fedoritch. But why has there been no sight nor sound of you this fortnight past; have you grown tired of us?"

"I have been ill, Maria Mihalovna," he replied, sullenly.

"Yes, one can see you have; you're so thin and pale!

Sit down directly, rest a little; but won't you let me tell them to cook some eggs, soft-boiled, for you? it's a long time still till dinner."

"Thanks, I don't want anything."

"Why not? they'll be ready in a minute; and they are capital eggs; the Finnish woman only brought them to-day."

"Oh, no, thank you."

"What's the matter with you? I kept expecting and expecting you; what does it mean? I thought; he doesn't come himself, nor send any French books? Do you remember, you promised me something: 'Peau de Chagrin,' wasn't it? I expect it and expect it. No! is *Alexandr Fedoritch* tired of us, I thought; upon my word, he's tired of us."

"I'm afraid, Maria Mihalovna, haven't you grown tired of me?"

"It's too bad of you to be afraid of that, *Alexandr Fedoritch*! I love you as though you were one of the family. I can't tell of course about *Nadinka*, for she's still a child; what does she know? how can she value people properly! Every day I kept repeating to her: 'Why is it, I wonder, *Alexandr Fedoritch* doesn't call, why doesn't he come?' and I was always expecting you. Would you believe that I would not sit down to dinner every day till five o'clock. I kept thinking he's sure to come in. And *Nadinka* said sometimes: 'What is it, *maman*? whom are you waiting for? I'm hungry, and so is the Count, I think.'"

"And the Count—has he been here often?" asked *Alexandr*.

"Yes, nearly every day, and sometimes twice in the same day; he is so kind, he has taken such a fancy to us. . . . 'Well,' said *Nadinka*, 'I want my dinner, and that's all about it! it's time to begin.' 'But since *Alexandr Fedoritch*,' said I, 'will be coming?'"

"'He won't come,' she said, "would you like me to bet you a wager he won't? it's useless to wait." Madame Lubetzky stabbed *Alexandr* with these words as with a knife.

"She—she said so?" he asked, trying to smile.

"Yes, that's just how she talked and hurried us. You know I am severe, though I do look good-tempered. I scolded

her: one time you're for waiting till five o'clock for him, and won't eat any dinner, and then you don't want to wait at all —you're absurd! it's wrong of you! Alexandr Fedoritch is an old friend of ours, he is fond of us, and his uncle, Piotr Ivanitch, has given us many proofs of his friendliness; it's not right to neglect people so! He is vexed, I daresay, and will not come——”

“What did she say?” asked Alexandr.

“Oh, nothing. You know how saucy she is with me, skips away, begins to sing, and runs off or says, ‘He'll come, if he wants to!’ such an imp she is! I too thought —he'll come! I look out, another day passed—and no sign of you! I said again, ‘What can it be, Nadinka, is Alexandr Fedoritch well?’ ‘I don't know, *maman*,’ she said, ‘how can I tell?’ ‘Shall we send to find out what's wrong with him?’ We were going to send and going to send, and so we never sent; I somehow forgot it, left it to her, and she's so thoughtless.—See now how she's given herself up to this riding! She saw the Count once on horseback from the window and kept on at me, ‘I want to ride’ and so on again and again! I said this and that; but all of no use. ‘I want to!’ Mad thing! No, there was no riding on horseback in my young days; we were brought up altogether differently! But nowadays, shocking to relate, ladies have begun to smoke: over opposite us lives a young widow; she sits on the balcony all day and smokes; people go by, and pass on horseback—she doesn't care! Sometimes in our days if there were a smell of tobacco in the drawing-room even from the men——”

“Has it been going on long?” asked Alexandr.

“I don't know, they say it's been in fashion the last five years: I suppose it's from the French——”

“No, I asked; is it long since Nadyezhda Alexandrovna began to learn riding?”

“Ten days about. The Count is so kind, so polite: what is there he isn't ready to do for us; how he spoils her! Look what heaps of flowers! all from his garden. Sometimes I'm really ashamed. ‘Why do you, Count,’ I say, ‘spoil her like that? there'll be no putting up with her soon!’ and I scold her too. I have been with Maria Ivanovna and Nadinka to see his covered court. As you know, I look after her myself; who can see after a daughter better than

her own mother? I myself undertook her education and though I say it who shouldn't—God grant every one such a daughter! And Nadinka had her lessons in my presence. Then we breakfasted in his garden, and now they go riding every day. Ah! what a splendid house he has! we went over it; all in such taste, so luxurious!"

"Every day!" said Alexandr almost to himself.

"Why not let her enjoy herself! I was young myself once."

"And do they go for long rides?"

"For three hours at a time. Come, and what has ailed you."

"I don't know; there was something wrong with my chest," he said, laying his hand on his heart.

"Didn't you take anything for it?"

"No."

"There, these young people! they keep doing nothing, keep putting it off from day to day, and then take steps when it's too late! What did you feel? was it an ache or a griping or a rheumatic pain?"

"It was an aching and griping and rheumatic pain!" said Alexandr absently.

"That was a chill; God forbid! you mustn't let it go on, you'll kill yourself like that . . . it might turn to inflammation of the lungs; and you took no medicine! Do you know what you must do? take some opodeldoc and rub your chest vigorously at night, and rub it till it's red, and drink a herb in your tea; I will give you the receipt."

Nadinka returned pale with fatigue. She fell on to the sofa, almost fainting.

"Look at her!" said Maria Mihalovna, laying her hand on her head: "how tired you are, you are half-dead. Drink some water and go and undress and unlace your corset. This riding will do you no good!"

Alexandr and the Count remained the whole day. The Count was invariably courteous and affable to Alexandr, invited him to visit him, to look at his garden, suggested that he should share their next expedition on horseback, offered him a horse.

"I can't ride," said Alexandr coldly.

"Can't you?" asked Nadinka, "and it is so delightful! Shall we go again, to-morrow, Count?"

The Count bowed.

"That's enough, Nadinka," remarked her mother, "you are troublesome to the Count."

There was nothing, however, to show that any special relation had arisen between Nadinka and the Count. He was equally friendly to the mother and the daughter; he did not seek opportunities of speaking to Nadinka alone, did not follow her into the garden, and looked at her exactly as he did at her mother. The freedom of her intercourse with him, and the expeditions on horseback showed on her part the whimsicality and impulsiveness of her character, her *naïveté*, perhaps her want of experience, her ignorance of the conventions of the world, on her mother's part weakness and want of foresight. The civilities and attentions of the Count and his daily visits might be ascribed to the proximity of the villas and the warm reception he always received at the Lubetzkys. This thing seemed natural, looked at with a simple eye; but Alexandr looked at it with a magnifying glass and saw much—oh! much—which one would not see with the simple eye.

"Why," he asked himself, "had Nadinka changed to him?" She did not wait for him now in the garden, she did not meet him with a smile, but with a look of dismay. For some time she had dressed with special care, there was no carelessness now in her manners. She was more guarded in her behaviour, as though she had become more sensible. Sometimes one caught a glimpse in her eyes and her words of something like a secret. What had become of her sweet caprices, her wildness, her sallies, her frolicking? It had all disappeared. She had become serious, thoughtful, silent. It seemed as though something were tormenting her. She was like all other girls now; she was as hypocritical, told the same lies, asked with the same interest after your health; was so continually polite and friendly for form's sake—to him—to Alexandr! with whom? Oh God! his heart sank.

"It is not for nothing, not for nothing," he kept repeating to himself, "there is something beneath it! But I will find out, come what may, and then woe to him."

And that day, when the Count had taken his leave, Alexandr tried to snatch a moment to speak with Nadinka alone. What did he not do? He took the book with

which she had once called him away from her mother into the garden, showed it to her, and went out to the bank of the river, thinking she would run out at once. He waited and waited—she did not come. He returned to the room. She was reading the book and did not look at him. He sat down near her. She did not raise her eyes, and then asked casually, in a superficial tone, was he busy with his literary work, had anything new come out? Of the past not a word.

He began to talk to her mother. Nadinka went out into the garden. The mother left the room and Adouev too rushed into the garden. Nadinka seeing him, rose from the bench, did not come to meet him, but went quietly by a roundabout way towards the house, as though to avoid him. He quickened his pace, she did the same.

"Nadyezhda Alexandrovna!" he shouted from the distance, "I should like to say two words to you."

"Come indoors; it's damp here," she answered.

When she had gone in, she sat down again near her mother. Alexandr felt quite ill.

"So you are afraid of the damp air," he said with bitterness.

"Yes, the evenings are so cold and dark now," she replied with a yawn.

"We shall soon return to town," said her mother.

"May I trouble you, Alexandr Fedoritch, to go to our apartments and remind the man-in-charge to renew two locks on the doors, and the shutter in Nadinka's bedroom. He promised to do it, but he'll forget, depend upon it. They are all alike; care for nothing but making money."

Adouev got up to go.

"Come and see us before long!" said Maria Mihalovna. Nadinka did not speak.

He had already reached the door, when he turned round to her. She made three steps towards him. His heart throbbed.

"At last!" he thought.

"Will you be with us to-morrow?" she asked coldly, though her eyes were bent on him with eager curiosity.

"I don't know; why?"

"Oh, I only asked; shall you come?"

"Would you like me to?"

"Shall you come to-morrow?" she repeated in the same chilly tone, but with greater impatience.

"No!" he answered with vexation.

"And the next day?"

"No; I shall not come for a whole week, perhaps, two—a long while!" And he turned a scrutinising glance upon her, trying to read in her eyes what impression his words produced.

She did not speak, but her eyes dropped at the very instant of his reply, and what was to be seen in them? Were they clouded with pain or flashing with a gleam of pleasure—nothing could be deciphered from that lovely marble face.

Alexandr clutched his hat in his hand and went away.

"Don't forget to rub your chest with opodeldoc!" screamed Maria Mihalovna after him. And now Alexandr had again a problem to solve—what was the aim of Nadinka's question? what was to be inferred from it—desire or dread of seeing him?

"Oh, what torture, what torture!" he said in despair.

Poor Alexandr could not hold out; he went on the third day. Nadinka was at the garden-fence when he arrived. He was beginning to rejoice, but no sooner had he drawn near the bank, when she, as though she had not seen him, turned away and after a few undecided steps on the path just as if she were walking without an object, went towards the house.

He found her with her mother. Two gentlemen from the town were there, their neighbour Maria Ivanovna, and the inevitable Count. Alexandr's sufferings were unendurable. Again the whole day passed in empty, useless conversation. How the guests wearied him! They talked calmly of all kinds of trifles, argued, joked, laughed.

"They laugh!" said Alexandr: "they can laugh, while—Nadinka—has changed to me! It's nothing to them! They are wretched, empty creatures; they are pleased with everything!"

Nadinka went into the garden; the Count did not go out with her. For some time he and Nadinka seemed to avoid one another in Alexandr's presence. He sometimes came on them alone in the garden or indoors, but then they separated and did not meet any more in his presence. A

new dreadful discovery for Alexandr—a sign that there was an understanding between them.

The guests broke up. The Count too took his leave. Nadinka did not know this, and did not hasten indoors. Adouev left Maria Mihalovna without ceremony and went into the garden. Nadinka was standing with her back to Alexandr, leaning with her arm on the trellis and her head propped on her hand, just as on that never-to-be-forgotten evening. She did not see him and did not hear his approach.

How his heart beat, while he stole up to her on tiptoe !  
He could hardly breathe !

“ Nadyezhda Alexandrovna ! ” he said, hardly audibly in his emotion.

She startled as though a shot had been fired off near her, turned round, and moved a step away from him.

“ Tell me, please, what is that smoke there ? ” she said in embarrassment, pointing with alacrity to the opposite side of the river, “ is it a fire, or some furnace—in a factory ? ”

He looked at her without speaking.

“ Really, I thought it was a fire. Why do you look at me like that, don’t you believe it ? ”

She broke off.

“ You too,” he began, shaking his head, “ you too, like others, like every one ! . . . Who could have expected this, two months ago ? ”

“ What do you mean ? I don’t understand you,” she said, and tried to go away.

“ Stop, Nadyezhda Alexandrovna ; I am not able to bear this torture any longer.”

“ What torture ? really I don’t know.”

“ Don’t dissimulate ; tell me. Are you the same as you were ? ”

“ I am always the same ! ” she said with decision.

“ How ! haven’t you changed to me ? ”

“ No ; I think I am just as friendly with you ; I am as glad to meet you.”

“ As glad ! why, then, are you running away from the trellis ? ”

“ I run away ! see how you imagine things ; I am standing at the trellis, and you say—I am running away.”

She gave a forced laugh.

"Nadyezhda Alexandrovna, give up this pretence," continued Adouev.

"What pretence? what are you worrying me about?"

"Is this you? My God, six weeks ago, at this very spot!"

"What is that smoke on the other side, I should like to know."

"It's awful, awful!" said Alexandr.

"What have I done to you? You left off coming to us—you must admit. There was no keeping you against your will," began Nadinka.

"That's all pretence! don't you know why I ceased coming?"

She shook her head, looking away.

"And the Count?" he said almost menacingly.

"What Count?"

She made a face, as though she had heard of the Count for the first time.

"What Count! tell me now," he said, looking her straight in the eyes, "that you are indifferent to him?"

"You are out of your senses!" she answered, stepping away from him.

"Yes, you are right!" he continued, "my brain is failing day by day. How can any one behave so artfully, so ungratefully to a man, who loved you beyond everything in the world, who had forgotten everything for you, everything . . . who thought soon to be happy for ever, and you——"

"Well, what about me?" she said, still retreating.

"What about you?" he replied, maddened by her coolness. "You have forgotten! let me remind you that here on this very spot you have vowed a hundred times to be mine. 'God hears these vows,' you said. Yes, He heard them! You must feel shame before Heaven, and these trees and every blade of grass, every witness of our happiness: each grain of sand here speaks of our love; think, look at yourself!—you have broken your oath!"

She looked at him with horror. His eyes glittered, his lips were white.

"Ugh! how spiteful you are!" she said timidly, "what are you angry about? I did not prevent you, you still did not speak to *maman*—why, you know best."

"Speak to her after this behaviour?"

"What behaviour? I don't know."

"What! I will tell you at once; what is the meaning of these interviews with the Count; these expeditions on horseback?"

"What! should I run away from him when *maman* goes out of the room! and the riding means—that I like riding—it's so delightful; you gallop—ah, what a dear creature that horse Lucy! have you seen her?—she knows me already."

"And the change in your behaviour to me?" he continued; "why, the Count is with you every day from morning to night!"

"Ah, my goodness, do I know why? how ridiculous you are! *maman* wishes it."

"It's false! *maman* wishes what you wish. For whom are all those presents, notes, albums, flowers. All *maman*?"

"Yes, *maman* is so fond of flowers. Yesterday she bought from the gardener——"

"And what is it you talk about in whispers?" went on Alexandr, paying no attention to her words; look at me, you are pale, you yourself feel your guilt. To ruin a man's happiness, forget, destroy everything so quickly, so easily, hypocrisy, ingratitude, lying and treachery!—yes, treachery! How could you let yourself come to this? A rich count, a society lion, deigns to cast a glance of favour on you, and you were melted, you fell down before this tinsel god; where is your modesty!!! Let there be no more of the Count here," he said in a suffocating voice; "do you hear? stop it, break off all relations with him, let him never find his way again into your house. . . . I won't have it."

He clutched her by the hand violently.

"*Maman, maman!* here!" shrieked Nadinka in a piercing voice, tearing herself away from Alexandr, and directly she was free making headlong towards the house.

He sat on the bench clutching his head in his hands.

She ran into the room pale and scared, and dropped into a chair.

"What is it? What's the matter with you? Why did you shriek?" her mother asked in alarm, as she went to meet her.

"Alexandr Fedoritch—is unwell!" she could only just articulate.

"And what frightened you so?"

"He is so dreadful, *maman*; for God's sake, don't let him come near me."

"How you frightened me, you mad thing. Well, what if he is unwell? I know his chest is bad. What is there dreadful in it? it isn't consumption! let him rub it with opodeldoc—it will soon pass off; it's evident he didn't obey me, he did not rub it."

Alexandr recovered himself. The delirium passed, but his tortures were redoubled. He had not cleared up his doubts, but had terrified Nadinka, and he certainly would not obtain an answer from her now; this was not the way to set to work. The thought came to him as it does to every lover: "How if she is not guilty? it may be in reality she is indifferent to the Count? Her thoughtless mother invites him every day; what is she to do? He, as a man of the world, is attentive, Nadinka is a pretty girl; perhaps even he wishes to please her, but still it does not follow that he has succeeded in pleasing her. She perhaps is pleased with the flowers, the rides on horseback, and innocent recreation, but not with the Count himself? And even let us admit that there is some coquetry in it; is not this pardonable? Other and older girls—God knows what they do."

He drew a breath, a ray of happiness shone in his soul. Lovers are all like this; now very blind, now too sharp-sighted. Besides, it is so sweet to defend the beloved object.

"But why the change in her behaviour to me?" he suddenly asked himself and grew pale again. "Why does she avoid me, and why is she silent, as though she were ashamed? Why was it yesterday, an ordinary day, she was dressed so smartly? There were no guests, except him. Why did she ask if the ballets would soon be beginning?" It was a simple question; but he remembered that the Count had airily promised to get her a box, however difficult it might be; consequently he would be with them. Why had she gone out of the garden? why had she not come into the garden? why had she asked this? why had she not asked that?"

And again he fell into grievous doubts and again suffered bitterly, and came to the conclusion that Nadinka had really never loved him at all.

"My God! my God!" he said in despair, "how hard, how sad is life! Grant me the peace of death, the sleep of the soul."

In a quarter of an hour he came into the room, downcast and apprehensive.

"Good-bye, Nadyezhda Alexandrovna," he said timidly.

"Good-bye," she said shortly, not raising her eyes.

"When may I come again?"

"When you please. However, we go to town this week; we will let you know then."

He went away. More than a fortnight passed. Everyone had by then come to town. Aristocratic drawing-rooms began to be lighted up. And the petty official lighted two lamps on the wall in his drawing-room, bought two stones of wax-candles and set out two card-tables, in expectation of Stepan Ivanitch and Ivan Stepanitch, and announced to his wife that they would be at home on Tuesdays.

But all this time Adouev did not receive an invitation to the Lubetzkys. He met their cook and their maid-servant: the maid, directly she saw him, began hurrying away; it was clear that she acted in the spirit of her mistress. The cook stopped.

"Why is it, sir, you have forgotten us?" he said, "and it's ten days already since we've been back."

"But perhaps you are not settled yet—you don't receive?"

"How not receive, sir; every one has been to see us already, except you; the mistress is always wondering about it. Now his grace is good enough to visit us every day. Such a kind-hearted gentleman! I went the other day with a copy-book from our young lady to him—he gave me a banknote."

"You idiot!" said Adouev, and turned on his heel away from the gossip. He went in the evening past the Lubetzkys. It was lighted up. A carriage was at the door.

"Whose carriage?" he asked.

"Count Novinsky's"

The next day and the next it was the same thing. At last, one day he went in. The mother received him cordially, with reproaches for his absence, scolded him for not having rubbed his chest with opodeldoc; Nadinka—calmly, the Count—courteously. Conversation did not make much progress.

This happened twice. In vain he looked expressively at Nadinka; she did not seem to observe his looks, and how she had observed them of old! Sometimes, when he was talking to her mother, she used to stand facing him and make faces at him from behind Maria Mihalovna, play tricks and make him laugh.

He was a prey to intolerable wretchedness. He thought of nothing but how to force himself from the bondage he had entered upon so light-heartedly. He wanted to obtain an explanation. "Whatever the answer was," he thought, "it would not matter, so long as doubt were changed into certainty."

He was a long while deliberating how to attack the matter; at last he made a plan of some sort and went to the Lubetzkys.

Everything was in his favour. That carriage was not at the door. He went quietly into the drawing-room and stopped a minute at the door of the inner room to take breath. Nadinka was there playing on the piano. At the further end of the room Madame Lubetzky was sitting on a sofa and knitting at her shawl. Nadinka, hearing steps in the outer room, went on playing more softly and stretched her head forward. She waited with a smile for the guest to appear. The guest made his appearance and instantly the smile vanished, and a look of dismay took its place. Her face changed a little and she rose from her seat. This was not the guest she was expecting.

Alexandr bowed without speaking and moved on like a shadow towards her mother. He walked softly without his old self-confidence, with hanging head. Nadinka sat down and went on playing, looking round restlessly now and then.

In half an hour the mother was summoned from the room on some matter or other. Alexandr went up to Nadinka. She rose and tried to escape.

"Nadyezhda Alexandrovna!" he said mournfully, "stay a little, spare me five minutes—no more."

"I cannot listen to you," she said, moving away; "the last time you were——"

"I was to blame then. Now I will speak in a very different way; you shall not hear a syllable of reproach, I give you my word. An explanation is inevitable: you

know you gave me permission to ask your mother for your hand. Since that so much has happened—that—that I must repeat my request. Sit down and go on playing; your mother will hear less then; it's not the first time, you know—”

She obeyed mechanically; with heightened colour she began to touch a chord and bent her eyes upon him in a tremour of expectation.

“Where have you gone, *Alexandr Fedoritch?*” asked mother, returning to her place.

“I wanted to have a little talk with *Nadyezhda Alexandrovna*—about—literature,” he answered.

“Well, do by all means; indeed, it's a long time since you have had a talk together.”

“Answer me briefly and sincerely, one question only,” he began in an undertone, “and our explanation will be over directly. You no longer love me?”

“*Quelle idée!*” she answered in confusion; you know how *maman* and I have always valued your friendship—how glad we always have been to see you.”

Adouev looked at her and thought “Are you that capricious but sincere child? that freakish, frolicsome creature? How quickly she has learnt to dissemble! how soon the feminine instincts have awakened in her! Can it be that her sweet caprices were the germs of dissimulation and hypocrisy? . . . . to think, even without my uncle's method, how quickly this girl has been trained into a woman! and all the Count's training, and all in some two or three months! Oh, uncle, uncle! here again you are only too right.”

“Listen,” he said in such a voice, that the mask of dissimulation dropped off, “let us leave mamma out of the question: be for an instant the Nadinka of old days when you loved me a little, and answer me straight out; I must know, by God, I must.”

She did not speak, but changing the music before her, began mechanically to look at it and play a difficult passage.

“Very well, I will alter my question,” continued Adouev; “tell me, has not some one—I do not even ask who—but simply has not some one supplanted me in your heart?”

She snuffed the candle and was a long while setting the wick straight, but she did not speak.

"Answer, Nadyezhda Alexandrovna; one word will release me from torture and you—from an unpleasant explanation."

"Ah, for God's sake, leave off! What am I to say to you? I have nothing to say!" she answered, turning away from him.

Another man would have been satisfied with such a reply, and would have seen that there was no need to trouble himself further. He would have understood everything from the unspoken anguish written on her face and expressed in her gestures. But Adouev was not content. He was like an executioner torturing his victim, and was himself animated by a kind of wild despairing desire to drink the cup once for all and to the dregs.

"No!" he said, "let us put an end to this torture to-day; doubts, one blacker than another, are distracting my mind and tearing my heart to pieces. I have suffered agony; I believe my heart will break with the strain . . . . I cannot feel convinced of my suspicions; you must resolve it all yourself, or I shall never be at rest."

He looked at her and waited for an answer. She did not speak.

"Have pity on me!" he began again—"look at me; am I like myself? every one is frightened of me, no one recognises me—every one pities me—except you."

It was true; his eyes glowed with a strange fire. He was thin, and white; the perspiration stood in large drops on his brow.

She looked stealthily at him and there was something like sympathy in her eyes. She even took his hand, but let it fall directly with a sigh, and still she did not speak.

"Well?" he asked.

"Ah! leave me in peace!" she said in a tone of anguish, "you torture me with your questions."

"I beseech you, for God's sake!" he said, "make an end of all with one word. Of what use is concealment to you? I cannot get rid of a foolish hope, I will not leave off, I will come to you every day, pale, distracted. . . . I shall bring you misery. Forbid me the house, I will linger under your windows, will meet you at the theatre, in the street, everywhere, like a ghost. All this is foolish, laughable very likely—to any one who can laugh—but it is

agonizing to me! You don't know what passion is—what it leads to! God grant you may never find out! . . . . What is the good of it? wouldn't it be better to speak at once?"

"But what are you asking me about?" said Nadinka, throwing herself back in her chair. "I am utterly bewildered—my head is in a fog."

She pressed her hand spasmodically to her forehead and withdrew it again at once.

"I ask you—has some one taken my place in your heart? one word—yes or no—will decide everything; will it take long to say it?"

She tried to say something but could not, and dropping her eyes struck a note with one finger. One could see that there was a violent struggle going on within her. "Ah!" she groaned at last in anguish. Adouev wiped his forehead with his handkerchief.

"Yes or no?" he repeated, holding his breath.

Some seconds passed.

"Yes or no?"

"Yes!" whispered Nadinka, hardly audibly, then bent over the piano, and, as though unconsciously, began to strike some loud chords.

This *yes* was a scarcely perceptible sound, like a sign, but it stunned Adouev; his heart seemed torn, his limbs shook beneath him. He dropped into a chair near the piano and said nothing.

Nadinka looked at him in alarm. He gazed senselessly at her.

"Alexandr Fedoritch!" shrieked her mother suddenly from her room, "which of your ears is tingling?"

He did not answer.

"*Maman* is asking you a question," said Nadinka.

"Eh?"

"Which of your ears is tingling?" cried the mother—"quick!"

"Both!" Adouev uttered gloomily.

"Your're wrong—it should be the left! And I have been foretelling the future, and whether the Count will be here to-day."

"The Count!" ejaculated Adouev.

"Forgive me!" said Nadinka, in a voice of entreaty,

turning towards him. "I don't understand myself—this has all happened without my foreseeing it . . . against my will . . . I don't know how . . . I could not deceive you."

"I will keep my word, Nadyezhda Alexandrovna," he replied, "I will not utter a single reproach to you. Thank you for your sincerity . . . you have done much . . . much—to-day . . . it was hard for me to hear that 'yes,' but it was still harder for you to say it . . . Farewell; you will not see me again; it's the only return I can make for your honesty . . . but the Count, the Count!"

He ground his teeth and walked to the door.

"Ah," he said, turning back, "what will this bring you to? The Count will not marry you; what are his intentions?"

"I don't know!" answered Nadinka, shaking her head mournfully.

"My God! how blind you are!" cried Alexandr with horror.

"He can have no bad intentions," she replied in a weak voice.

"Take care of yourself, Nadyezhda Alexandrovna!"

He took her hand, kissed it, and with uneven steps went from the room. It was dreadful to look at him. Nadinka remained motionless in her place.

"Why are you not playing, Nadinka?" asked her mother in a few minutes.

"Directly, *maman!*" she replied, and with her head bent pensively on one side, began uncertainly to touch the keys. Her fingers were trembling. She was evidently suffering from the pricks of conscience and from the doubt flung at her in the words "Take care of yourself." When the Count arrived, she was silent and depressed; and there was some constraint in her manner. On the pretext of a headache she went early to her room. And that night life seemed a sorrowful thing to her.

Adouev had scarcely got down the staircase when his strength failed him, he sat down on the last step, covered his eyes with his handkerchief and broke into loud tearless sobs. The hall-porter was passing near the vestibule at the time. He stood still and listened.

"Marfa, Marfa!" he called, going up to the dirty door,

"come here, listen, how some one is groaning like an animal. I thought it might be our dog escaped from her chain, but no, it's not."

"No, it's not the dog!" repeated Marfa listening. "What a strange thing!"

"Come and bring a lantern; it hangs there behind the stove."

Marfa brought the lantern.

"Is he still groaning?" she asked.

"Yes! could some tramp have got in?"

"Who is there?" asked the porter.

No answer.

"Who is there?" repeated Marfa.

Still the same sound. They both went off quickly. Adouev rushed away.

"Ah, it was some gentlemen," said Marfa; looking after him, "and you thought it was a tramp! There, it's just what was on the tip of my tongue to say! Would a tramp be groaning in other people's passages?"

"Well, he must have been drunk then."

"That's better still!" answered Marfa; "do you suppose every one's like you? it's not every one groans like you when he's drunk?"

"Then why was it—from hunger or what?" remarked the porter with vexation.

"Why!" said Marfa looking at him and not knowing what to say, "how can one tell, he had lost something, perhaps—money."

They both squatted down at once and began to search with the lantern on the ground in every corner.

"Lost something!" repeated the porter, as he turned the light on the ground, "where could he lose anything here? the staircase is clean and made of stone, you could see a needle here—lost something indeed! We should have heard if he had lost anything; it would have tinkled on the ground; of course he would have picked it up! where could one lose anything here? There is nowhere! Lost something! He didn't lose anything; was he likely to have lost something? lose anything—I daresay! no; he'd be more likely, you depend upon it, to find a way of putting things in his pocket instead of losing them! I know them, the pickpockets! lost indeed! where did he lose it?"

And they spent a long time crawling on the ground, looking for the lost money.

"No, no," said the porter at last with a sigh, then he put out the light, and pinching the wick with two fingers wiped them on his coat.

## CHAPTER VI.

THAT evening at twelve o'clock, when Piotr Ivanitch, with a candle and book in one hand, while he held his dressing-gown off the ground with the other, went from his study into his bedroom to go to bed, his valet informed him that Alexandr Fedoritch wished to see him.

Piotr Ivanitch knitted his brows, thought a minute, and then said calmly: "Take him into the study; I will come at once."

Returning there, he greeted his nephew with "Good evening, Alexandr, it's a long time since we have seen you. We have given up expecting you by day, and here all at once you burst on us at night! Why so late? But what's wrong with you? you are quite pale."

Without answering a word, Alexandr sat down in an armchair in extreme exhaustion. Piotr Ivanitch looked at him with curiosity.

Alexandr sighed.

"Are you well?" asked Piotr Ivanitch, anxiously.

"Yes," replied Alexandr in a feeble voice, "I move, I eat, I drink, and therefore I am well."

"Don't make light of it though; consult a doctor."

"Other people have already given me that advice, but no doctors or opodeldocs can be of use to me; my disease is not physical."

"What is the matter with you? You haven't been gambling, or lost money?" asked Piotr Ivanitch with lively interest.

"You can never imagine trouble apart from money matters!" replied Alexandr, trying to smile.

"What is the trouble then? Everything is all right at your home—I know that from the letters to which your mother treats me every month; at the office nothing can be

worse than it was ; then come trifling matters—love, I suppose."

"Yes, love ; but do you know what has happened ? when you know you will be horrified."

"Tell me ; it's a long while since I've been horrified," said his uncle, taking a seat ; "however, it's not difficult to conjecture ; no doubt, they have deceived you——"

"You can reason so calmly, uncle, while I——" said Alexandr, "am suffering in earnest ; I am wretched, I am really ill."

"Is it possible that you have grown so thin through love ? What a disgraceful thing ! No, ~~you have been ill~~, and now you are beginning to recover ; and it's high time ! Seriously, this folly had been dragging on for a year and a half. A little longer, and upon my word, I should have begun to believe in eternal and unchanging love."

"Uncle !" said Alexandr, "have pity on me ; there is a hell now in my heart."

"Eh ? what then ?"

Alexandr drew his armchair up to the table and his uncle began to move away from his nephew's proximity the inkstand, the paper-weights, &c.

"He comes at midnight," he thought, "hell in his heart ; he'll infallibly smash something."

"Sympathy I don't get from you, and I don't ask it," began Alexandr ; "I ask for your help, as my uncle, my relation—— I seem foolish to you—isn't it so ?"

"Yes, you would, if you were not to be pitied."

"You feel pity for me ?"

"Great pity. Do you suppose I am a flint ? A good, clever, well brought-up boy, throwing himself away and what for ? a mere trifle."

"Show me that you feel for me."

"In what way ? Money, you say, you don't want."

"Money ! oh, if my trouble had been only from want of money, how I would have blessed my fate !"

"Don't speak so," observed Piotr Ivanitch seriously ; "you are a boy—you would curse and not bless your fate ! I have cursed it more than once in bygone days—even I !"

"Give me a patient hearing."

"Shall you be staying long ?" asked his uncle.

"Yes, I want all your attention ; why ?"

"So as to know whether we shall want to have supper. As a rule I am in the habit of going to bed without supper ; but now, since we shall be sitting up a long while, we will have a little, and will drink a bottle of wine, and meantime you tell me everything."

"You can eat supper ?" asked Alexandr in amazement.

"Yes, indeed I can ; and won't you ?"

"I—supper ! why, even you will not be able to swallow a morsel when you know that it is a matter of life and death."

"Of life and death ?" repeated his uncle ; "well, that is certainly a grave matter ; however, we will try ; perhaps we shall manage to swallow some."

He rang the bell.

"Bring in," he said to the valet who appeared, "whatever there is for supper, and tell them to fetch a bottle of Lafitte with a green seal."

The valet disappeared.

"Uncle ! you are not in a suitable frame of mind to listen to the sad story of my unhappiness," said Alexandr, taking his hat : "I had better come to-morrow."

"No, no, not at all," interrupted Piotr Ivanitch briskly, keeping his nephew by the hand, "I am always in the same frame of mind. To-morrow—not a doubt of it—you will break in upon breakfast, or worse still—on business. It would be far better to have it all over at once. Supper will not hinder matters. I shall hear and understand all the better. On an empty stomach, you know, it's not well——"

They brought in supper.

"Now, Alexandr ; let me——" said Piotr Ivanitch.

"No, I don't want anything to eat, uncle !" said Alexandr impatiently, shrugging his shoulders, as he saw his uncle busying himself over the supper.

"At least drink a glass of wine ; it's not bad wine !"

Alexandr shook his head in refusal.

"Well, then, take a cigar and tell your story, and I will be all ears," said Piotr Ivanitch, setting briskly to work upon his supper.

"Do you know Count Novinsky ?" asked Alexandr, after a short pause.

"Count Platon?"

"Yes."

"We are friends; why?"

"I congratulate you on such a friend—he's a scoundrel!"

Piotr Ivanitch at once ceased munching and gazed in surprise at his nephew.

"What a discovery!" he said; "do you know him?"

"Very well."

"Have you known him long?"

"Three months."

"How is that? I have known him for five years, and always considered him an honourable man, and indeed you will not hear from any one—— All praise him, but you run him down."

"Is it long since you have taken to standing up for people, uncle? In the past it used to be——"

"Even in the past I always stood up for honourable men."

"Show me where there are any honourable men?" said Alexandr scornfully.

"Why, such as you and I; in what are we not honourable? The Count—if the talk of him can be believed—is also an honourable man; still, who knows? there is something bad in every one; but all men are not bad."

"Yes, all, all!" said Alexandr with decision.

"How about you?"

"I? I at least bear away from the world a heart broken but unstained from baseness, a spirit shattered but free from the reproach of lying, hypocrisy, treachery; I am not corrupted."

"So much the better; come, let us see. What has the Count done to you?"

"What has he done? He has robbed me of everything."

"Be more precise. By the word *everything* one may understand God knows what all—money, for instance; he is not doing that."

"Of what is dearer to me than all the treasures in the world," said Alexandr.

"What might this have been?"

"Everything—happiness, life."

"Here you are alive!"

"More's the pity—yes! But this life is worse than a hundred deaths."

"Tell me straight out what has happened."

"It's awful!" exclaimed Alexandr, "My God! my God!"

"I have it! hasn't he enticed your charmer away from you—that—what's-her-name? Oh yes! he's masterly at it; it would be hard for you to compete with him. Oh, the rascal!" said Piotr Ivanitch, raising a piece of turkey to his mouth.

"He shall pay dearly for his masterliness!" said Alexandr, fuming. "I am not going to give way without a struggle. . . . Death shall decide which of us is to gain Nadinka. I will call out this vulgar gallant! he shall not live, he shall not enjoy the treasure he has robbed me of. I will wipe him off the face of the earth!"

Piotr Ivanitch began to laugh.

"Oh, the provinces!" he said; "*à propos* of the Count, Alexandr, did he say whether they had sent him the china from abroad? He ordered the set in the spring; I should like to have a look at—"

"We are not talking about china, uncle; did you hear what I was saying?" interrupted Alexandr severely.

"Hm!" his uncle mumbled in assent, picking a small bone.

"What do you say?"

"Oh nothing. I am listening to what you are saying."

"Answer me one word; will you do me the greatest service?"

"What is it?"

Will you consent to be my second?"

The cutlets are quite cold!" remarked Piotr Ivanitch with annoyance, pushing away the dish.

"You are smiling, uncle?"

Well; how is one to listen to such stuff: you ask for a second?"

"What is your answer?"

"It's a matter of course; I will not come."

"Very well; some one else shall be found, some outsider, who will come to my aid in this bitter wrong. I only ask you to take the trouble to communicate with the Count to learn what conditions."

"I cannot, I could not bring my tongue to propose such an imbecility to him."

"Then good-bye!" said Alexandr, taking his hat.

"What! are you going already? and won't you have any wine?"

Alexandr walked to the door, but he sank down on a chair near the door in utter exhaustion.

"Whom can I go to? whose help can I get?" he said in a low voice.

"Listen, Alexandr?" began Piotr Ivanitch, wiping his lips with a napkin and moving an armchair to his nephew. "I see that I must talk to you in earnest. Let us talk it over. You have come to me for assistance; I will assist you, only not in the way you imagine, and on condition—that you be guided by me. Don't ask any one to be your second; there will be no use in it. For a trifle you will make a scandal, it will be spread about everywhere, people will laugh at you, or worse still, make use of it to injure you. No one will consent, but even if some madman could be found to second you, it would be all for nothing. The Count will not fight; I know him."

"Not fight! is there no grain of manliness in him?" observed Alexandr with bitter malice; "I should not have suspected he was as base as that!"

"He is not base, but only sensible."

"Tell me with whom are you chiefly angry—with the Count, or with her—what's-her-name—Anuta, is it?"

"I hate her, I despise her," said Alexandr.

"Let us begin with the Count; let us suppose that he accepts your challenge, let us even suppose that you find a fool to second you—what will come of it? The Count will kill you, like a fly, and every one will laugh at you afterwards; a fine revenge. Let us even suppose that you did by some accident kill him—what sense is there in it? would you bring back your charmer's love by that? No, she would only hate you for it, and besides, they would send you for a soldier. . . . And what is the chief consideration; you would tear your hair in despair at your behaviour another day and would quickly have grown cold to your charmer. Is she the only one in the world—your Maria or Sophia—what's-her-name?"

"They call her Nadyezhda."

"Nadyezhda? then who is Sophia?"

"Sophia! oh, that was in the country," said Alexandre reluctantly.

"Do you see?" continued his uncle, "there it was Sophia, here it's Nadyezhda, somewhere else it will be Maria. The heart is a very deep well; it's a long while before you sound it to the bottom. It goes on loving till old age."

"No, the heart loves once."

"And you go on repeating what you have heard from others. The heart goes on loving as long as its strength is not all spent. It lives its life and also, like everything else in man, has its youth and its old age. If one love has failed, it only dies away, and is still until the next; if a second time it's thwarted, it still has the power, so long as its love is unavailing, to love again for a third and a fourth time, until at last the heart puts all its strength into some one happy union, when nothing thwarts it, and then it slowly and gradually grows cold. With some men love was successful the first time, so they go crying out that one can love once only. So long as a man is in good health and not in decrepitude——"

"You always talk of youth, uncle, meaning, of course, material love."

"I talk of youth because love in old age is a blunder, an abnormality. And how about material love? There is no such love, or rather it is not love, just as there is no love purely ideal. Where was I? . . . oh, you'd been sent for a soldier; besides this, after this scandal your charmer wouldn't allow you in her sight. You would have injured her and yourself too for nothing—do you see? I hope we have worked out this question conclusively on one side. Now——"

Piotr Ivanitch poured himself out some wine and drank it.

"What a blockhead!" he said, "he has sent up cold Lafitte."

Alexandre sat in silence with drooping head.

"Now, tell me," continued his uncle, warming the glass of wine with both hands, "why did you want to wipe the Count off the face of the earth?"

"I have already told you why; has he not blasted my happiness? He has pounced like a wolf——"

"On the fold!" put in his uncle.

"He has robbed me of all," Alexandr went on.

"He has not robbed; he only came and took it. Was he bound to inquire whether your charmer was taken or not? I don't understand that absurdity of which lovers have been guilty from the creation of the world—that of getting angry with a rival. Can anything be more senseless—wipe him off the face of the earth! why? because he is found agreeable! But was your—what's her name?—Katinka—averse to him? She yielded of herself, she has ceased to love you—it's useless to quarrel—you won't bring her back! And to insist—is egoism! To demand fidelity from a wife—there is some sense in that; in that case an obligation has been entered into; the essential welfare of the family often depends on it; but even then one can't demand that she should not love any one—you can only demand that she—hm, well . . . And haven't you yourself done everything you could to give her away to the Count? Have you made any fight for her?"

"Why, here I am wanting to fight," said Alexandr, jumping up from his place, "and you would put a stop to my honourable impulse——"

"Fight with a cudgel in your hand, I daresay!" interrupted his uncle; "the civilised world has other weapons. You ought to have fought a duel of another kind with the Count before the beauty's eyes."

Alexandr looked in perplexity at his uncle.

"What kind of duel?" he asked.

"I will tell you directly. How have you acted up till now?"

Alexandr, with a great deal of circumlocution, in chaotic fashion, told him the whole course of the affair.

"Do you see? it is you who have been to blame in everything all round," was Piotr Ivanitch's comment after listening with a scowl. "How many stupid things you have done! Ah, Alexandr, what evil genius brought you here! it wasn't worth while for you to come. You might have been doing all these things at home, by the lake, with your aunt. Ah, how can any one be so childish—make scenes—fly into a fury? fie! Who does these things nowadays? What if your—what's-her-name—Julia—tells it all to the Count? But no, there is no danger of that, thank goodness."

She's so sensible of course, that in answer to his questions about your relations she has said——”

“What has she said?” asked Alexandr, hastily.

“That she had been making a fool of you, that you had been in love with her, that she hated you, could not bear you—as they always do in such cases.”

“Do you suppose—that she—has said that?” asked Alexandr, turning paler.

“Without the least doubt. Can you imagine that she is relating to him how you used to pick yellow flowers together there in the garden? What simplicity!”

“What kind of a duel, though, with the Count?” asked Alexandr with impatience.

“Why, you ought not to have been rude to him, and avoided him, and given him sulky looks but, quite the contrary, you should have replied to his friendliness by twice, three times, ten times as much friendliness; as for the—what's her name—Nadinka? I fancy that's not it—you shouldn't have exasperated her with reproaches, you should have been indulgent with her caprices, and have maintained an appearance of noticing nothing, as though any change were something quite impossible. You ought not to have let them get so far as an intimate acquaintance, you should have broken in on their *tête-à-têtes* skilfully—as though accidentally—you should have been everywhere with them—have even gone riding with them—and all the while you should be silently challenging your rival before her eyes, and should lay bare his weak points, as though in surprise at them, without forethought, good-naturedly, even reluctantly and compassionately, and little by little draw off him the disguise in which a young man gets himself up before a pretty girl. You ought to have taken notice what struck and dazzled her most in him and then have skilfully touched on those very points, presented them plainly, and shown them in their everyday light, and have proved that the new hero is nothing particular in himself, and has only assumed this exalted get-up for her benefit. And to do all this, coolly, patiently, skilfully—that's the duel as it is in our age! But it's not a game for such as you!”

At this point Piotr Ivanitch drank off a glass and at once poured out some more wine.

“Despicable dissimulation! have recourse to double-

dealing to gain a woman's heart!" remarked Alexandr indignantly.

" You would have recourse to the cudgel ; pray, is that any better ? By dissembling one may keep some one's affection ; by force—I hardly think so ! The desire of getting rid of your rival I understand ; in that way you would have succeeded in keeping the woman you love for yourself, you would have forestalled or averted danger—it's very natural ! but to kill him because he has inspired love is exactly as though you stumbled and hurt yourself and then hit the place, on which you stumbled, as children do. You may think as you please, but the Count is not to blame ! I see you know nothing of the mysteries of the heart, that's why your amours and your novels are both in such a poor way."

" Amours !" said Alexandr, shaking his head contemptuously ; " but is a love very flattering or very lasting that is inspired by dissimulation ? "

" I don't know about it being flattering, that's as a man likes to look at it ; it's quite a matter of indifference to me. I haven't the highest opinion of love in general—you know that. As far as I'm concerned, I should be glad if there were no such thing at all, but that such a love is more lasting I am sure. There is no dealing straightforwardly with the heart. It is a strange instrument. Inspire a passion however you like, but retain it by your intelligence. Dissimulation—that is one side of intelligence, there is nothing despicable in it. There is no need to disparage your rival and resort to slandering ; you would set your charmer against you in that way. . . . you must only shake off him the spangles in which he dazzles her, and set him before her as a plain ordinary man, and not a hero . . . . I think it is quite excusable to defend one's own interests by honorable forms of dissimulation which are not disdained even in warfare. Why, you were wanting to get married ! a pretty husband you would have been, if you had begun to make scenes with your wife and show your rival a stick, and you'd none the less have won—ahem ! "

Piotr Ivanitch pointed to his forehead.

" Your Varinka was twenty per cent. more sensible than you when she made the condition that you should wait a year."

"But could I have acted a part even if I had the ability? To do this one must not love as I do. Some people pretend sometimes to be cold, and stay away for a few days from policy—and that produces an effect. But for me to try to be politic when, at the sight of her, my soul caught fire and my limbs shook and trembled under me, when I was ready to endure any torture, if only I might see her . . . No! whatever you say, for me there is more rapture in loving with all the strength of the soul, even though one suffers, than in being loved without loving, or in loving in a half-hearted way, as an amusement, on a repulsive, calculated system, and playing with a woman as if she were a lapdog and then throwing her aside."

Piotr Ivanitch shrugged his shoulders.

"All right then, suffer, if it's so agreeable to you," he said. "Oh, the provinces! oh, Asia! You ought to have lived in the East; there they give the women orders whom they are to love, and if they don't obey, they drown them. No, here," he continued as if to himself, "to be happy with a woman can't be managed on your principles, a madman's really—but it can be done by prudence—many conditions are necessary . . . one must know how to turn a girl into a woman on a well-thought-out plan, on a method, if you like, so that she may understand and fulfil her destination. One must trace a magic circle round her, not too narrow, so that she may not be conscious of its limits and may not overstep them; one must artfully gain the mastery not only of her heart—that's something, but it's a slippery and unstable possession—but of her intelligence, her will, and must make her tastes, her disposition subject to your own, so that she may look at things with your eyes, think with your brain."

"That means, make her a doll, or the silent slave of her husband!" interposed Alexandr.

"Why? You must manage so that she shall lose nothing of her character and dignity as a woman. Allow her liberty of action in her own sphere, but let your shrewd wit keep watch over her every action, every breath, every step, so that the husband's eye, ever wakeful—however outwardly indifferent—may note every passing emotion, every whim, every germ of feeling, everywhere and always. Establish—without her observing it—a perpetual control over her without any kind of tyrannising, and lead her into the ways you

desire. . . . Oh, a wonderful and difficult training is wanted, and the best training is—a husband of intelligence and experience—that's where it all is!"

He coughed significantly and tossed off a glass at one draught.

"Then," he continued, "a husband can sleep in peace when his wife is not beside him, or can sit with his mind at rest in his study while she is asleep."

"Since I see, uncle," continued Alexandr, "that you sit with mind at rest in your study while my aunt is asleep, I surmise that the husband is—"

"Sh, sh! be quiet," his uncle began to say, lifting his hand; "it's a good thing my wife's asleep, but—"

At this moment the door of the study began very quietly to open, but no one was visible.

"But the wife," said a woman's voice in the corridor, "must not show that she understands her husband's grand system of training and must set up a little system of her own, without chattering about it over a bottle of wine."

Both the Adouevs rushed to the door, but a sound of quick steps, of fluttering skirts came from the corridor, and all was still again.

The uncle and nephew looked at one another.

"What do you say now, uncle?" asked the nephew, after a pause.

"What, nothing!" said Piotr Ivanitch, knitting his brows. "I have chosen a bad time to boast! Learn, Alexandr, that it's better not to marry, or else choose a fool; you'll not be a match for a clever woman: it's a difficult task to train her!"

He fell into thought, then clapped his hand to his brow.

"How came I not to consider that she would know of your visit so late?" he said with annoyance, "that a woman will never sleep when there's a secret between two men in the next room, that she'd be certain either to send her maid or come herself . . . not to have foreseen it! stupidity! and it's all your doing, and this cursed glass of Lafitte! I've been blabbing! What a lesson from a girl of twenty . . . ."

"You're uneasy, uncle!"

"What is there to be uneasy about? not much! I have

made a mistake, I must not lose my self-possession, but must extricate myself skilfully."

He grew thoughtful again.

"She was boasting," he began again, "what sort of training could she use? no, that could not be in her power; she is young! she only said that . . . from irritation; but now she has discovered this magic circle, she too will begin to play a part . . . oh, I know a woman's nature! But we shall see."

He smiled confidently and cheerfully, and his brow grew smooth again.

"What were we talking of? oh yes, I think you were wanting to murder your—what's-her-name?"

"I despise her from the depths of my soul," said Alexandr, with a heavy sigh.

"There, you see! you're already halfway to recovery. But is that the truth? you are still angry, I fancy; you will very likely go back there again."

"What an idea! after this."

"Men do go back after more than that! your word of honour now—not to go?"

"On my word of honour then."

"Well, then."

"If we——"

"I will tell you then there's nothing to despise her for."

"Nothing to despise her for! no, uncle, that's beyond everything! The Count, he did not know! but she! Who is to blame then? I?"

"Well, almost so, but in reality no one is to blame. Tell me, why do you despise her?"

"For her base conduct."

"In what does it consist?"

"In repaying with ingratitude a lofty, an unbounded passion."

"What has gratitude to do with it? did you love her for her sake, to oblige her? did you want to do her a service, eh? According to that you should have loved your mother a little better."

Alexandr looked at him and did not know what to say.

"You ought not to have displayed your feeling in its full strength before her; a woman begins to grow cool when a man comes out altogether. You ought to have found out

her character and behaved in accordance with it, and not have lain down at her feet like a dog. How is one to get on without understanding the companion with whom you have to do in any relation? You would have seen then that you must not expect more from her. She had played her romance with you to the end, just as she is playing it with the Count, and as she very likely will play it again with some one else; she cannot go deeper or further! that's not in such a nature; and God only knows what you are expecting."

"But why did she love another?" interposed Alexandr with bitterness.

"What a crime you have discovered! what a sensible question! Ah, you primitive creature! Why did you love her? Come, get over loving her as easily!"

"Does it depend on me?"

"Well, then, did her loving the Count depend on her? You maintained yourself that the impulses of the heart ought not to be held in check, but as soon as you are touched by it yourself then you ask why did she love him! Why did so-and-so die? Why did what's-her-name go out of her mind? how is one to answer such questions? Love must end some time; it can't last for ever."

"Oh, I will be revenged on her!" said Alexandr.

"You are ungrateful," continued Piotr Ivanitch, "it's too bad! Remember that for a year and a half you have been ready to fall on every one's neck with joy, and haven't known what to do for happiness! a year and a half of unbroken pleasure! Whatever you say—you are ungrateful!"

"Ah, uncle, for me there was nothing in the world so sacred as love—life without her is not life!"

"Ah!" Piotr Ivanitch, broken with vexation, "I am sick of listening to such nonsense!"

"I could have worshipped Nadinka," continued Alexandr, "and I would not have grudged her any happiness in the world; I had dreamed of spending my whole life with Nadinka—and what has happened? What has become of that sublime, immense passion of which I dreamed? it has been transformed into a stupid petty comedy of sighs and scenes—jealousy, lying, and hypocrisy—oh, my God!"

"Why did you imagine what does not happen? Didn't I

tell you plainly that up to now you have been trying to live a kind of life that's never possible? According to you a man's only business was to be a lover, a husband, father . . . and of anything else you won't even hear. Man is something beyond this; he is a citizen as well, and has a calling, an occupation of some kind—he's an author, a land-owner, a soldier, an official, or a manufacturer. You have read novels, and listened to your auntie out there in the wilds, and have come up here full of these ideas. You still imagined—*a sublime passion*.

“Yes, sublime!”

“Oh, please, stop! is a sublime passion possible?”

“What?”

“Why this. By a passion we mean, I suppose, when feeling, inclination, attraction has reached such a pitch that it ceases to be guided by reason? Well, what is there sublime in that? I don't understand it; it's only a madness—the man falls below the dignity of man. And why do you present only one side of the medal? I am speaking of love—turn the other side and you will see that love was not such a bad thing. Remember your moments of happiness; you keep buzzing into my ears——”

“Oh, don't remind me, don't remind me!” said Alexandr, with a gesture of his hand, “it's very well for you to reason so, because you believe in the woman you love; I should like to see what you would have done in my place.”

“What should I have done? I should have sought distraction . . . at the factory. Won't you like to try tomorrow?”

“No, I can't feel at one with you in anything,” Alexandr exclaimed mournfully; “your views do not reconcile me to life, but make me more averse to it. It makes me miserable, it is a chill breath in my soul. Hitherto love has saved me from this chill; it is no more—and now there is torture in my heart—I am frightened, I am weary.”

“Turn to work.”

“It is all true, uncle, you and those like you can reason so. You are a cold man by nature. You think, feel, and speak just as a steam-engine rolls along a railway line—evenly, smoothly, easily.”

“I hope there's no harm in that; it's better than dashing

off the track, pitching into the ditch, as you are now, and not knowing how to keep upright."

Piotr Ivanitch looked at his nephew and stopped short at once.

"What is it? I do believe you're crying!" he said, and his face grew dark; that is to say, he blushed. Alexandr did not answer. He remembered his lost happiness, and all that was now so different. And the tears streamed down his cheeks.

"Oh, oh! for shame!" said Piotr Ivanitch; "are you a man? Don't cry, for goodness' sake, before me!"

"Uncle! remember the years of your youth," said Alexandr sobbing; "could you have calmly and indifferently endured the bitterest injury which Fate ever sends upon a man? To live for a year and a half such a full life and all to end so suddenly—nothing—emptiness! If I had the consolation," he went on, "of having lost her through circumstance—if they had forced her against her will—even if she had died—then it would have been easier to bear—but that another!—that's terrible, insufferable! What am I to do? I am suffocating, I am ill—it's torture, agony! I shall die. I shall shoot myself."

He leaned his elbows on the table; covered his head with his hand, and sobbed aloud.

Piotr Ivanitch's self-possession was gone. He walked up and down the room twice, then stopped opposite Alexandr and scratched his head, not knowing how to begin.

"Drink a little wine, Alexandr," said Piotr Ivanitch, as gently as he could; "perhaps that—"

Alexandr did nothing, but his head and shoulders shook convulsively; he kept on sobbing. Piotr Ivanitch frowned, and with a wave of the hand went out of the room.

"What am I do with Alexandr?" he said to his wife. "He is sobbing there in my room and has driven me out; I am quite worn out with him."

"And did you leave him like that?" she said, "poor boy! Let me, I will go to him."

"But you will do no good; he is such a nature—just like his aunt; she was just as lacrymose; I have been arguing with him not a little already."

"Only arguing?"

"And convincing him; he agreed with me."

"Oh, I don't doubt it; you are so clever—and hypocritical!" she added.

"Thank goodness, if I am; that, I should suppose, is all that was wanted."

"Ah, I dare say you would, still he is crying."

"I'm not to blame; I did everything to comfort him."

"What did you do?"

"What didn't I? I've been talking a whole hour—my throat's quite sore. I laid down the whole theory of love as plain as possible—and offered him money—and tried him with supper and wine."

"And he's still crying."

"Yes, and groaning more than ever."

"That's astonishing! Let me try, and you meanwhile think out your new method."

"What, what?"

But she had glided like a shadow from the room.

Alexandr was still sitting with his head dropped on his arms. Some one touched his shoulder. He lifted his head; before him stood a young and beautiful woman, in a dressing-gown and a cap *à la Finoise*.

"*Ma tante!*" he said.

She took a seat near him and looked steadily at him, as only women can, and kissed him on the forehead, and he pressed his lips to her hand. They talked a long while.

An hour later he had gone away thoughtful but with a smile, and slept soundly for the first time after many sleepless nights. She returned to her bedroom with tear-stained eyes. Piotr Ivanitch had long ago been snoring.

## CHAPTER VII

ABOUT a year had passed since the scenes and events related in the last chapter. Alexandr changed by slow degrees from the depths of despair to the numbness of despondency.

Lizaveta Alexandrovna consoled him with all the tenderness of a friend and a sister. He willingly yielded himself to this sweet guardianship. All such natures as his love to give their will into the keeping of another. For them a nurse is a necessity.

Passion had at last died away in him, his genuine grief had passed, but he was sorry to part with it; he kept it up by force or, better to say, created an artificial sorrow for himself, played with it, beautified it and revelled in it.

It pleased him somehow to play the part of a victim. He was subdued, dignified, gloomy, like a man supporting, in his own words, "a blow from fate."

Lizaveta Alexandrovna listened indulgently to his lamentations and comforted him as she could. It was not altogether disagreeable perhaps to her, because in spite of everything, she found in her nephew sympathy for her own heart, she heard in his complaint against love the expression of sufferings not unfamiliar to her.

She eagerly listened to the utterances of his grief, and answered them with imperceptible sighs and tears unseen by any one.

She even found for her nephew's feigned and mawkish sorrows, words of consolation in a like tone and spirit; but Alexandr would not even listen.

"Oh, don't speak to me, *ma tante*," was his reply, "I don't want to dishonour the holy name of love by using it for my relations with that—" Here he made a disdainful face and was ready, like Piotr Ivanitch, to say "that—what's-her-name?"

"However," he would add, with still greater disdain, "it was pardonable in her; I was on a higher level than she and the Count and all their pitiful and petty circle; it is not strange that I remained misunderstood by her.

"My uncle declares that I ought to be grateful to Nadinka," he continued, "for what? Her love was all vulgarity and commonplaceness. Was there any heroism or self-sacrifice to be seen in it? No, everything was carried on by her almost with her mother's knowledge! Did she once for my sake overstep the conventions of the world and duty? never! That—love indeed!"

"What kind of love would you expect from a woman?" asked Lizaveta Alexandrovna.

"What!" replied Alexandr, "I should expect from her the first place in her heart. The woman I love ought not to notice, not to see any man except me; every minute not spent with me should be for her a minute lost."

Lizaveta Alexandrovna tried to conceal a smile. Alexandr did not notice it.

"For my sake," he went on, with flashing eyes, "she ought to be ready to sacrifice every pitiful consideration of profit and advantage, throw off the despotic yoke of her mother, or her husband; flee with me, if need be, to the ends of the earth; bear resolutely every privation—that is love! but—"

"And how would you have rewarded such love!" asked his aunt.

"I? Oh!" began Alexandr, casting his eyes up to heaven, "I would have consecrated my whole life to her; I would have lain down at her feet. But did I not show Nadinka how I could love?"

"So you don't believe in feeling at all, when it is not shown as you wish it to be? Strong feeling is often concealed."

"You don't want to persuade me, *ma tante*, that such is the feeling concealed by my uncle, for instance?"

Lizaveta Alexandrovna suddenly blushed. She could not but agree inwardly with her nephew, that emotion without any kind of expression was a somewhat dubious thing, that possibly it was non-existent altogether, that if it did exist it would have forced its way out; and that over and above love itself its external manifestations were possessed of an inexpressible charm.

Here she passed in mental review every period of her married life and fell into a deep reverie. Her nephew's indiscreet hint stirred in her heart the secret which she was hiding in its depths and roused it to the question—was she happy?

She had no right to complain; all the outward conditions of happiness, of which the world is in pursuit, were fulfilled according to the programme laid down.

Her husband had worked untiringly and continued still to do so. But what was the real aim of his labours? Did he work for the common ends of humanity, fulfilling the task laid on him by destiny, or only for petty objects to attain the consideration of rank and wealth among people, or

perhaps that he might not become the slave of poverty, of circumstance? God only knew.

Lizaveta Alexandrovna could only come to the mournful conclusion that she and love for her were not the sole aim of his effort and activity. He had toiled as much before his marriage, before he knew anything of his wife. He neither spoke to her of his love nor asked for love from her; and he met her questions on the subject with a joke or an epigram. Soon after his acquaintance with her he had begun to talk of marriage, as though giving her to conclude that love was an understood thing in it, and that it was useless to talk much about it.

He had an aversion to scenes of all kinds—that was well enough; but he did not like genuine demonstrations of feeling, and did not believe in the need of them in others. Meanwhile he might by a single glance, a single word, have created in her a deep passion for him; but he did not say the word, he did not care to. The fact did not even flatter his vanity.

She tried to arouse his jealousy, thinking that then love must find expression. Nothing came of it. Directly he noticed that she preferred the society of a certain young man, he hastened to invite him to the house and show him friendliness, was untiring in his praise of his character, and was not afraid of leaving him alone with his wife.

Lizaveta Alexandrovna sometimes deceived herself, imagining that perhaps Piotr Ivanitch was acting from policy; might not his secret method consist in maintaining perpetual doubt in her, and in that way maintaining love itself? But at her husband's first mention of love she was immediately disillusioned.

If he had been coarse, unpolished, narrow, slow-witted, one of those husbands whose name is legion, whom it is so excusable, so necessary, so consoling to deceive, for their own sakes even, who seem to have been created for their wives, to look round them and fall in love with their diametrical opposites—then it would have been a different matter; she would very likely have behaved as the majority of wives do behave in like case. But Piotr Ivanitch was a man of an intelligence and tact not often to be met with. He was subtle, quickwitted, skilful. He understood all the agitations of the heart and troubles of the soul, but he under-

stood them—and nothing more. A complete index to the affairs of the heart was in his head, but not in his heart. In his reasoning on this subject it was clear that he was talking as of something he had heard and learnt by rote, but had not felt at all.

Lizaveta Alexandrovna felt his intellectual superiority to all surrounding him and was tortured by it. "If only he were not so clever," she thought, "I should have been saved."

He was bent on positive aims, that was clear, and he expected that his wife should not lead a life of dreams.

"But, my God!" thought Lizaveta, "if he only married to have a lady at the head of his house, to give his bachelor quarters the fulness and dignity of a family home, so as to have greater weight in society! A housekeeper—a wife—in the most prosaic sense of these words! But with all his intelligence, didn't he understand that love is present even in the positive aims of a woman? . . . Oh, let me pay for passion in agony, let me endure every suffering that is inseparable from love, if only I may live a complete life, if only I may feel that I am living and not stagnating."

She looked at her luxurious furniture and all the toys and costly knicknacks of her boudoir, and all this luxury seemed to her a cold mockery of real happiness. She had to look on at two monstrous extremes—in her husband and her nephew. One enthusiastic to folly—the other frozen to hardness.

"How little both of them—and the greater part of men—understand real feeling, and how well I understand it!" she thought. "And what is the good of it? why! oh, if only—"

She hid her eyes and stayed so some instants, then uncovered them, looked round, sighed heavily and at once resumed her ordinary calm demeanour. Unhappy woman! No one knew of it, no one saw it.

One day Alexandre came to his aunt in a paroxysm of ill-humour with the whole human species. Lizaveta Alexandrovna began to inquire the cause.

"You want to know," he began in a subdued, rapt tone, "'what is now my frenzied ill?'" I will tell you; you know I had a friend whom I had not seen for some years, but who had always kept a niche in my heart. When I was first here, uncle forced me to write a queer letter to him, in

which were inserted his favourite maxims and ways of thinking : but I tore it up and sent another, as it happened, so there was no lessening of our friendship from that. After that letter our correspondence dropped, and I lost sight of my friend. What has happened now ? Three days ago, walking along the Nevsky Prospect, I suddenly saw him. I was on fire in a minute, and tears were starting into my eyes. I stretched out my hands to him, but could not utter a word for joy ; I was quite faint. He took one hand and shook it. "How are you, Adouev !" he said in a voice as though we had parted only the day before. "Have you been here long ?" He was surprised that we had not met before, lightly inquired what I was doing, what office I was in, thought it needful to inform me at length that he had a splendid position and liked his work, his superiors, and his companions, and everybody, and his fate ; then said he had no time to spare, that he was hurrying to a dinner party he had been invited to. Do you hear, *ma tante* ! meeting a friend after this long separation, he could not put off a dinner-party."

"But perhaps they would have been waiting for him," observed his aunt ; "propriety does not permit——"

"Propriety against friendship ! and you too, *ma tante* ! but there is something more I had better tell you. He pressed his address into my hand, said that he would expect me the evening of the next day, and was gone. 'So be it then,' I thought, 'I will go.' I arrived. There were some ten people there, friends of his. He held out his hand to me in a more friendly way than the day before, it's true, but then, without uttering a word, at once proposed that we should sit down to cards. I said that I did not play, and took a seat alone on the sofa, expecting that he would throw down his cards and come to me. 'Don't you play ?' said he in surprise—'what will you do then ?' A nice question ! So I waited an hour, two hours ; he did not come to me ; I reached the limit of my patience. He offered me first a cigar, then a pipe, regretted that I did not play, that I was bored, tried to occupy me—how, do you imagine ?—by constantly turning to me and describing every successful and unsuccessful card he played. At last I could bear it no longer ; I went up to him and asked, did he intend to devote any time to me that evening ? And my heart seemed boiling

within me, my voice shook. It seemed to surprise him. He looked at me curiously. "Very well," he said, "let us finish the rubber." As this was all he said to me, I seized my hat and was about to go, but he noticed it and stopped me. "The rubber is just over," he said, "we will have supper directly." At last they finished the game. He took a seat near me and yawned; that was how our friendly conversation began. "You wanted to say something to me?" he inquired. This was said in such a matter-of-fact, unfeeling voice that I simply gazed at him with a mournful smile. Then he suddenly seemed to thaw and began to ply me with questions: 'What's the matter with you? isn't there something you are in want of? Couldn't I be of use to you in your official work?'—and so on. I shook my head, and told him that I did not want to talk to him of my work but of what was nearer to my heart. Then I began to tell him of my love, of my sufferings, of the emptiness of my heart. I began to be carried away and thought that the story of my sufferings was breaking through the crust of ice, that his eyes were not quite unbedewed by tears, when suddenly he burst out laughing! I looked at him, he had a handkerchief in his hands; he had been trying to control himself all the time I was talking, at last he could hold out no longer. I stopped in dismay.

"Enough, enough," he said, "better drink some vodka and we will have supper. Boy! some vodka. Come, come, ha, ha, ha!—there's some capital roast—ha, ha, ha!—roast beef."

He was going to take me by the hand, but I tore myself away and fled from the monster.

"There, that's what men are like, *ma tante*," said Alexandr in conclusion, then, with a wave of the hand, he was gone.

Lizaveta Alexandrovna felt pity for Alexandr.

"Piotr Ivanitch!" she said to him affectionately one day, "I have a request to make of you?"

"What is it?"

"Guess."

"Tell me; you know your requests are never refused. I daresay it's about a country villa; well, it's still rather early."

"No!" said Lizaveta Alexandrovna. "Alexandr was with me the day before yesterday."

"Ah, I feel there's something wrong!" interposed Piotr Ivanitch, "well?"

Then Lizaveta Alexandrovna told him all she had heard from her nephew. Piotr Ivanitch gave a vigorous shrug.

"What do you want me to do in the matter? you see what a fellow he is!"

"You show him sympathy; ask him what is the state of his heart."

"You don't want me to weep with him?"

"It would do no harm."

"Ugh, that Alexandr; he is a burden!" said Piotr Ivanitch.

"A terrible burden; once a month to receive a letter from an old lady and to throw it—without reading it—under the table, or to talk a little to your nephew? Why, it keeps you from your whist! You men, you men! If you have a good dinner, Lafitte with a gold label and cards, it's everything; and no trouble about any one! If you have a chance of boasting and showing off as well, then you are happy!"

"Just what flirtation is for you," observed Piotr Ivanitch; "every one to his taste, my dear! What more would you have?"

"Why, some heart! of that there is never anything. It's vexing and sad to see you," said Lizaveta under her breath.

"Come, come, don't be angry; I will do all you tell me, only teach me how!" said Piotr Ivanitch.

Explain to him in a kind way what can be asked and expected of friends in these days; tell him that his friend is not so much to blame as he imagines. But can I teach you? You are so clever, and so good at dissembling," added Lizaveta Alexandrovna.

Piotr Ivanitch knitted his brows a little at the last word.

"Have you been going in for 'sincere outbursts,' pray?" he said with irritation, "and now you want to drag me into it!"

"It's for the last time, however," said Lizaveta Alexandrovna. "I hope that after this he will be pacified."

Piotr Ivanitch shook his head incredulously.

"There's some one rang the bell, isn't it he? What am I

to do? tell me again: give him a lecture—what else; money?"

"A lecture indeed! why, you'll make it worse. I asked you to talk a little of friendship, of affection, but more kindly, more sympathetically."

Alexandr made his bow in silence and in silence ate a hearty dinner, and between the courses rolled up little pellets of bread and looked from under his eyebrows at the bottles and decanters. After dinner he was going to take his hat again.

"Where are you off to?" said Piotr Ivanitch, "sit with us a little."

Alexandr obeyed in silence. Piotr Ivanitch thought how he could approach the subject in a gentle and discreet manner, and at once asked, speaking briskly: "I have heard, Alexandr, that your friend has treated you badly in some way?"

At these unexpected words Alexandr drew back his head, as though he had been wounded, and bent a gaze full of reproach upon his aunt. She too had not anticipated such a crude opening of the subject, and at first let her head droop over her work, then looked also with reproach at her husband; but he was under the combined influence of digestion and drowsiness, and did not perceive the import of these looks.

Alexandr answered his question by a scarcely audible sigh.

"Seriously," continued Piotr Ivanitch, "what treachery! what a friend! he had not seen him for five years, and when they met he did not smother his friend with embraces, but invited him in the evening, tried to make him play cards, and to give him supper. And then—treacherous creature!—noticed the sulky looks on his friend's face, and set to questioning him about his affairs, his circumstances, his needs—what base curiosity! no sincere outpourings! awful! awful! Please let me see this monster, bring him on Friday to dine! But what stakes does he play for?"

"I don't know," said Alexandr angrily. "You may laugh, uncle; you are right; I alone am to blame. To believe in men—to seek sympathy—in whom? to cast pearls—before whom? All around me is baseness, cowardice, pettiness, and I still kept my youthful faith in goodness, virtue, constancy."

Piotr Ivanitch was tranquilly beginning to nod.

"Piotr Ivanitch!" said Lizaveta Alexandrovna *sotte voce*, taking his hand, "you are asleep?"

"Me asleep!" said Piotr Ivanitch, rousing himself. "I heard everything—'virtue, constancy'; when did I fall asleep?"

"Don't disturb my uncle, *ma tante*," remarked Alexandr; "he won't go to sleep, then his digestion will be deranged, and man is lord of creation, no doubt, but he is also the slave of his stomach."

At this he tried to smile bitterly, but only succeeded in smiling sourly.

"Tell me what you wanted from your friend? sacrifices of some sort, I suppose; did you want him to climb over a wall or jump out of a window? How do you understand friendship?" asked Piotr Ivanitch.

"Now I ask no sacrifices—don't alarm yourself. Thanks to others, I have been brought down to a pitiful comprehension of friendship as well as of grief," said Alexandr. "I feel in myself the power of loving and I am proud of it. My unhappiness only results from my not having met a creature capable of such love and endowed with the power of loving."

"Power of loving!" repeated Piotr Ivanitch "it's just as if you said the power of weakness."

"It's not your way, Piotr Ivanitch" observed Lizaveta Alexandrovna; "you are not willing to believe in the existence of such love even in others."

"And you, is it possible you believe in it?" demanded Piotr Ivanitch, going up to her; "but no! you are joking! Do men love in that sentimental way?"

Lizaveta Alexandrovna paused in her work.

"How then?" she asked in an undertone, taking his hand and drawing him to her.

Piotr Ivanitch quietly loosened his hand from hers and pointed at Alexandr, who was standing at the window with his back to them and then began again his interrupted pacing of the room.

"How!" he said, "as though you had not heard how men love!"

"Oh, they love!" she repeated gloomily, and slowly took up her work again. .

The silence lasted a quarter of an hour. Piotr Ivanitch was the first to break it.

"You are rather bitter against men. Is it your love for that—what's-her-name? has made you so?"

"Oh! I had really forgotten about that foolishness."

"You see, it's just as I told you. What has made you so averse to men in general?"

"What indeed! Their baseness, their pettiness of soul."

"But what concern is it of yours? Do you want to correct mankind, pray?"

"What concern of mine? Am not I myself bespattered by the filth in which mankind is wallowing? You know what has been my experience—after all that, how can I help hating, despising my fellow-creatures!"

"What has been your experience?"

"Infidelity in love, hard, cold neglect in friendship."

"You've an attack of the spleen! You ought to busy yourself with work," said Piotr Ivanitch, "then you won't abuse mankind for nothing. What's wrong with the people you know? they're all decent people."

Alexandr made a gesture of supreme disgust.

\* Well, but what of yourself?" asked Piotr Ivanitch.

"I have done no harm to my fellow-men!" Alexandr retorted with dignity, "I have a loving heart; I opened my eyes wide to people, but how have they treated me?"

"What next! how ridiculously he talks!" observed Piotr Ivanitch turning to his wife.

"Everything is ridiculous to you!" she replied.

"And I myself did not ask from people," continued Alexandr, "either heroic achievements, or greatness of soul, or self-sacrifice. I only asked what was my due by every right."

"So you are all right? You have come out of things quite unspotted. Allow me to show it in a fresh light."

Lizaveta Alexandrovna noticed that her husband was beginning to speak in a stern voice and she trembled.

"Piotr Ivanitch," she whispered, "do stop."

"No, let him hear the truth. I will finish in a minute. Kindly tell me, Alexandr, when you stigmatised all your friends as cold and neglectful, did you feel something uneasy in your heart like a prick of conscience?"

"Why, uncle?"

"Oh, well, let us go a step further. You say you have no friends, but I always thought you had three."

"Three?" cried Alexandr, "I once had one and he—"

"Three," repeated Piotr Ivanitch persistently.

"The first—let us begin with the oldest—is this *one*. Any other man after not having seen you for some years, would have turned his back on you, but he invited you to go and see him, and when you arrived with sulky looks, he asked you sympathetically, whether you were in want of anything, began to offer you his services and his help, and I'm convinced he would have given you money—yes! in our times not every feeling stands that test; no, you must make me acquainted with him; I see he's a good fellow . . . though you think him a traitor."

Alexandr stood with downcast head.

"Well, and who do you think is your second friend?" asked Piotr Ivanitch.

"Who?" repeated Alexandr quite at a loss, "why, no one."

"He's no conscience!" broke in Piotr Ivanitch, "eh? Liza, and he doesn't blush! and what am I reckoned for, allow me to ask? It's too bad, Alexandr; this is a trait which even in school copy-books is called *base*."

"But you have always repulsed me," said Alexandr, timidly, not raising his eyes.

"Yes, when you tried to embrace me."

"You have laughed at me, at my feelings."

"Ah, it is out at last! " Sit down; I have not finished yet!" said Piotr Ivanitch coldly. "Your third and best friend I hope you will name yourself."

Alexandr gazed at him again and seemed to ask "Who is it?" Piotr Ivanitch pointed to his wife.

"Here she is."

"Piotr Ivanitch," interposed Lizaveta Alexandrovna, "don't be clever; for goodness' sake, stop."

"No, don't interfere."

"I know how to value my aunt's friendship," murmured Alexandr indistinctly.

"No, you don't; if you did, you would not have looked up to the ceiling for a friend, but would have pointed to her."

If you had appreciated her friendship, you would have valued her qualities too well to have despised men in general. She alone would have redeemed in your eyes the failings of others. Who has dried your tears and wept with you? Who has shown you sympathy in every foolishness, and what a sympathy! I suppose only your mother could have taken so warmly to heart everything that concerned you, and she would not have known how to do it. If you had felt it, you would not have talked of nothing but "hard cold neglect in friendship."

"Ah, *ma tanṭe!*" said Alexandr, overwhelmed and utterly annihilated by this reproach, "do you suppose that I don't value this and don't reckon you as a shining exception to the common herd? My God, I swear——"

"I believe you, I believe you, Alexandr!" she answered; "don't listen to Piotr Ivanitch; he makes a mountain out of a molehill: he likes an opportunity of showing his cleverness. Leave off, for heaven's sake, Piotr Ivanitch."

"Directly: I will finish directly—*one utterance more—the last!* You said that you performed everything demanded by your duties to others?"

Alexandr did not answer another word nor raise his eyes.

"Come, tell me, do you love your mother?"

Alexandr woke up at once.

"What a question?" he said; "whom should I love if not? I am devoted to her, I would lay down my life for her."

"Good. You must know very well that she lives only for you, that every pleasure, every pain of yours, is a pleasure and a pain for her. She does not count time now by months, nor weeks, but by the news of you, or from you. Tell me, is it long since you wrote to her?"

Alexandr gave a start.

"Three weeks," he murmured.

"No, four months! What am I to call such behaviour? The old lady is ill with sorrow."

"Is it possible? Good God!"

"It's not true, not true!" said Lizaveta Alexandrovna, and running at once to the bureau she brought out from it a letter which she handed to Alexandr. "She is not ill, but she is very worried."

"You are spoiling him, Liza," said Piotr Ivanitch.

"And you are severe to excess. Alexandr has had affairs which have for a time drawn him away."

"Forget his mother for the sake of a bit of a girl. . . . Important affairs, on my word!"

"Well, that's enough," she said persuasively, with a gesture at her nephew.

"Alexandr, after reading his mother's letter, had hidden his face behind it.

"Don't check my uncle, *ma tante*; let him thunder in reproaches; I have deserved worse; I am a monster!" he said, with a face of despair.

"Come, calm yourself, Alexandr!" said Piotr Ivanitch; "there are many such monsters. You have been led away by foolishness and have forgotten your mother for a time—that is natural; love for a mother is a quiet feeling. She had one thing in the world—it's natural she should be grieved. There is no reason to hang you for that. That's all. Well, I will go and have a nap."

"Uncle! are you angry?" said Alexandr in a voice of deep penitence.

"What makes you imagine that? What have I to be vexed about? I never even thought of being angry. Well, have I done well? Liza, eh?"

He tried, in passing, to kiss her, but she turned away.

"I fancy I carried out your behests exactly," added Piotr Ivanitch; "what is it? Oh, I forgot one thing; what's the state of your heart, Alexandr?" he asked.

Alexandr made no answer.

"What must my uncle think of me?" said Alexandr after a pause.

"Just what he did before," replied Lizaveta Alexandrovna. "Do you suppose he said all this to you from his heart—feeling it?"

"But do you, *ma tante*, cease to respect me? Good God! poor mamma!"

Lizaveta Alexandrovna gave him her hand. "I shall not cease to respect your heart, Alexandr," said she; "it is feeling which leads it into errors, and so I shall always pardon them."

"Ah, *ma tante*, you ideal woman!"

"No; simply a woman."

Alexandr was powerfully affected by his uncle's reproof. Sitting with his aunt he sank into painful reflections. He felt as though he had had a bucket of cold water poured over him.

"What is it? why are you like this?" inquired his aunt.

"Nothing, *ma tante*; there is melancholy in my heart. My uncle has let me understand myself; he was a splendid interpreter!"

"Don't you pay attention to him; he sometimes doesn't speak the truth."

"No, don't try to comfort me. I am disgusted with myself now. I have been despising and hating others, and now I despise myself as well. One can escape from other people, but where is one to take refuge from oneself?"

"Ah, that Piotr Ivanitch!" exclaimed Lizaveta Alexandrovna with a deep sigh; "he would drive any one to melancholy!"

"Only one negative consolation I still have, that I have not deceived anyone; I have not been inconstant in love or in friendship."

"You have not found people able to value you," his aunt replied; "but believe me, a heart will be found to appreciate you; I will guarantee that. You are still so young, forget all this and set to work; you have talent; write. . . . Are you writing anything now?"

"No."

"Begin to write."

"I'm afraid, *ma tante*."

"Don't pay attention to Piotr Ivanitch; you will write, won't you?"

"Very well."

"You will begin soon?"

"As soon as I can. It's all I have left to hope for."

Piotr Ivanitch, awakened from his nap, came up to him in full dress, his hat in his hand. He too advised Alexandre to set to work in his office, and at the subject of agricultural economy for the journal.

"I will try, uncle," answered Alexandre, "but I have just promised my aunt——"

Lizaveta Alexandrovna made a sign to him to be silent, but Piotr Ivanitch noticed it.

"What is it? what have you promised?" he asked.

"To bring me some new music," she replied.

"No, it's not true; what was it, Alexandr?"

"To write a novel or something."

"Haven't you yet given up literature?" said Piotr Ivanitch, picking a grain of dust off his clothes; "and you, Liza, lead him wrong—all to no purpose!"

"I have not the right to give it up," observed Alexandr.

"Who wants to prevent you?"

"One hope in the world remains to me, and am I to destroy that too? If I waste what has been entrusted me from above, then I waste myself."

"But what is it has been entrusted to you, explain to me, please."

"That, uncle, I cannot explain to you. One needs to understand it of oneself. Have you felt a tempest of passion in you; has your fancy fermented and created artistic visions for you which craved embodiment?"

"High flown! Well, what of this?" asked Piotr Ivanitch.

"Why, that to the man who has not felt this it is impossible to explain the desire to write when some restless spirit keeps repeating to one day and night, asleep and awake: write, write."

"But when you haven't the ability to write?"

"Enough, Piotr Ivanitch; you haven't the ability yourself, so why interfere with any one else?" said Lizaveta Alexandrovna.

"Excuse me, uncle, if I remark that you are not a judge in this matter."

"Who is a judge? is she?"

Piotr Ivanitch pointed to his wife.

"She says it to make fun of you, and you believe her," he added.

"But you yourself, when I first arrived here, advised me to try—to try myself."

"Well, what of it? You tried—nothing came of it, and you should throw it aside."

"Ah!" said Lizaveta Alexandrovna with annoyance, turning away to the table.

"As for the emotions and the rest of it—who does not feel it?"

"You, I should think for the first!" observed his wife.

"Come, now! But you know even I have been in ecstasy."

"Over what? I've no recollection of it."

"Every one experiences such things," continued Piotr Ivanitch, turning to his nephew, "every one has been stirred by the silence or the darkness of night, or what not, by the sound of the forest, by a garden, or lake, or the sea. If none but artists felt it, there would be no one to understand them. But to reflect all these sensations in their works—is a different matter; talent is needed for it; and that, I fancy, you have not."

"Piotr Ivanitch! it's time you started," said Lizaveta Alexandrovna.

"Directly. You want to be distinguished?" he continued, "you have something by means of which you may be distinguished. The editor praises you; he says that your articles on agriculture are capitally worked up; that there is thought in them—they all show a trained hand, and not an amateur. I was delighted. Bah! thought I, the Adouevs were all good heads! you see even I have vanity! You may both gain distinction in your official work and win a reputation as a writer."

"A fine reputation; a writer on manure."

"Every one in his place; one man is destined to soar into heavenly regions, another to burrow in manure and extract a treasure from it. I don't understand why one should despise the humbler calling? it, too, has its poetry.) You would do your work as an official, gain money by your labours, marry suitably, like most people. I don't know what more you want? You do your duty, your life is passed with honour and industry—that's what happiness consists in! in my opinion it is so. Here am I, councillor of state by official rank, a manufacturer by trade; offer me the title of greatest poet in exchange, and, God knows, I would not take it!"

"Piotr Ivanitch, you really will be late!" interrupted Lizaveta Alexandrovna; "it will soon be ten o'clock."

"Indeed, it's time. Well, *au revoir*. But as for imagining ourselves—God only knows why—exceptional people," muttered Piotr Ivanitch, as he went out; "it's the . . ."

## CHAPTER VIII

AFTER this conversation Alexandr began again to create a world of his own—rather a wiser one than the first. His aunt encouraged this inclination in him, but secretly, when Piotr Ivanitch was asleep, or had gone out to the factory or to the English Club.

She questioned Alexandr about his occupations. And how this delighted him now! He explained to her the plan of his works and sometimes asked—under the guise of advice for her approval.

She often differed from him, still oftener agreed.

Alexandr clung to his work, as one clings to the last hope. "After this," he said to his aunt, "there is nothing for me; then the barren desert, without water, without greenness, obscurity, emptiness—what will life be then? a living tomb!" And he worked without ceasing.

He spent over it a great deal of reflection, and feeling and sheer hard work and nearly half a year of time. At last the novel was finished, corrected, and a fair copy written out. His aunt was enraptured.

In this novel the scene was not laid in America, but in a village of Tambov; the persons of the plot were ordinary people: slanderers, liars, and wretches of every kind in frockcoats, jilts in corsets and hats. Everything respectable, and in place.

"I think, *ma tante*, this I might show to my uncle."

"Yes, yes, of course, she replied," but, however, wouldn't it be better to send it to be published as it is without him?"

"No, better show it!" answered Alexandr; "after your criticism, and my own judgment, I am afraid of nobody."

They showed it. Piotr Ivanitch frowned a little when he saw the manuscript and slightly shook his head.

"Wait a little before you shake your head," said his wife, "and just hear it. . . . Read it aloud to us, Alexandr. Only listen attentively, don't go to sleep, and afterwards tell us your opinion of it. One can find defects everywhere if you like to look for them. But you must make allowances."

"No, why? only be impartial," added Alexandr.

"There's nothing for it; I will listen," said Piotr Ivanitch

with a sigh," only on condition, first, that you don't read directly after dinner, or else I cannot pledge myself not to fall asleep—don't take that to yourself, Alexandr ; whatever is read to me directly after dinner I begin to get sleepy—and secondly, if there is anything good in it, I will say what I think of it ; if not, I will only say nothing, and then you will do as you choose."

The reading was begun. Piotr Ivanitch didn't once fall asleep ; he listened without taking his eyes off Alexandr, once or even twice smiled, and twice nodded his head approvingly.

"You see," said his wife in a whisper, "I told you so."

He nodded to her too.

The reading continued for two evenings in succession. On the first evening after the reading, Piotr Ivanitch, to his wife's astonishment, told them all that was to happen later.

"But how do you know?" she asked.

"Is it so strange! It's not a new idea—that has been written of a thousand times over. It would not be necessary to read further, only we will see how it is developed by him."

On the second evening, while Alexandr was reading the last page, Piotr Ivanitch rang. A servant appeared.

"I am ready to dress," he said ; "excuse me, Alexandr, for interrupting. I am in a hurry, I am late for whist at the club."

Alexandr finished. Piotr Ivanitch was going away at once.

"Well, *au revoir!*" he said to his wife and Alexandr ; "I shall not look in here again."

"Stop, stop," cried his wife ; "why are you saying nothing about the novel?"

"I ought not by the agreement," he replied, and was just going.

"It's obstinacy!" she said, "oh, he is obstinate. I know him ! Don't think about it, Alexandr."

"It's ill-natured!" thought Alexandr ; "he wants to drag me into the dust, to pull me down to his sphere. All the same, he is a clever official, a manufacturer, and nothing more ; but I am a poet."

"This is beyond everything, Piotr Ivanitch," began his wife, scarcely able to restrain her tears. "Say something at least. I saw you nodded in token of approval, so you liked it a little. Only you won't acknowledge it out of obstinacy. How can we acknowledge that we like the novel! We are too clever for that. Confess that it's good."

"I nodded; because even from this novel one can see Alexandr is clever; but he did not do a clever thing in writing it."

"However, uncle, justice of some kind."

"Listen; of course you won't believe me, and it's useless to dispute, we had better await the result. I will do something to put an end to this between us for ever. I will call myself the author of the novel, and will send it off to my friend, who is on a journal: we shall see what he says. You know him, and certainly would have confidence in his opinion. He is a man of experience."

"Very well, we shall see."

Piotr Ivanitch sat down to the table and at once wrote a few lines, then passed the letter to Alexandr.

"In my old age I have taken to authorship," he had written; "what's to be done: I want to be famous, to succeed in it—I have gone a little crazy! I have sent the novel enclosed. Look at it, and if it is suitable print it in your journal, for payment, of course; you know I don't like working for nothing. You will see it and hardly believe it's mine, but I authorise you to sign my name to it, to prove I am telling the truth."

Relying upon a favourable reply about the novel, Alexandr awaited the answer tranquilly.

Three weeks passed by, however, still there was no answer. At last one morning a large parcel and letter was brought in to Piotr Ivanitch.

"Ah! they have sent it back!" he said, glancing slyly at his wife.

He did not break open the note nor show it to his wife, as she did not ask to see it. That same evening before going to the club he himself started to his nephew.

The door was not closed. He went in; Yevsay was snoring, stretched diagonally across the entry on the floor. The candle wanted snuffing badly and hung down out of the

candlestick. He looked into the inner room—it was dark.

“Oh, the provinces !” muttered Piotr Ivanitch.

He roused Yevsay, showed him the door and the candle, and threatened him with a stick. In the third room Alexandr was sitting, his arms on the table and his head on his arms ; he too was asleep. Some papers were lying before him. Piotr Ivanitch looked—verses.

He took a sheet and read as follows :

“My springtide fair is over now,  
Love's burning moment's gone for ever ;  
Love in my heart is deeply slumbering,  
Nor stirs with fiery breath my blood.  
Upon her altar-shrine deserted  
Another deity I've raised,  
To whom I pray.”

“He is deeply slumbering himself too ! Go on praying, my dear boy, don't be lazy !” said Piotr Ivanitch aloud. “Your own verses, but how they have exhausted you ! What need of any other opinion ? You have spoken for yourself !”

“Ah !” said Alexandr, stretching, “you are always hostile to my compositions ! Tell me candidly, uncle, what makes you so persistently persecute talent when you cannot help confessing —”

“Envy, to be sure, Alexandr. I have lived my life quietly, obscurely, have only fulfilled my duty, and was even proud and happy in it. When I am dead, that is when I shall feel and know nothing, *the harps of minstrel seers* shall not tell of me. How different with you ? do you know that your future fame, your immortality is in my pocket ?—what glory !”

“The answer to your note. Ah, for Heaven's sake, give it me directly ; what does he write ?”

“I haven't read it ; read it yourself aloud.”

Alexandr began to read aloud, while Piotr Ivanitch tapped his boot with his finger. This is what was in the letter :

“What mystification is this, my dear Piotr Ivanitch ? You writing novels ! And you thought you could catch an old bird like me ? But if you had really produced the novel lying before me, then I should tell you that the

most fragile products of your factory have far more solidity than this creation."

Alexandr's voice suddenly dropped.

"But I repudiate anything so insulting to you," he went on in timid and subdued tone.

"I don't hear, Alexandr, a little louder!" said Piotr Ivanitch.

Alexandr continued in a low voice.

"Since you take an interest in the author of the novel, you no doubt wish to know my opinion of it. Here it is. The author must be young. He is not stupid; but is not very happily at feud with the whole world. He is truly disillusioned. Oh, Lord, when will the race be extinct? What a pity that through a false view of life so much ability among us is wasted in empty, profitless dreams, in vain efforts after what they are not fitted for."

Alexandr paused and took breath. Piotr Ivanitch began to smoke a cigar and blew a ring of smoke. His face, as usual, expressed perfect calm. Alexandr continued to read in a low, hardly audible voice.

"Vanity, sentimentality, premature emotionalism with their inevitable consequence—indolence—these are the causes of this evil. Discipline, work, practical business—that's what our sickly and indolent young people want to sober them."

"The whole matter might have been made clear in three lines," said Piotr Ivanitch looking at his watch, "but he is writing a complete essay in a letter to a friend! isn't he a pedant? Are you going to read any more, Alexandr? throw it away; it's a bore. There is something I want to say to you."

"No, uncle, let me drink the cup to the dregs; I will read to the end."

"Well, I hope it will do you good!"

"This lamentable bent of mind," Alexandr read, "is apparent in every line of the novel you have sent me. Tell your *protégé* that an author only writes successfully, in the first place, when he is not under the sway of his personal feelings and passions. He must survey with calm untroubled gaze the world and life generally; otherwise, he will express only his Ego, with whom no one else has any concern. This defect is glaringly apparent in the novel. The second and

principal condition—which, pray, do not tell the author, out of compassion for his youth and vanity of authorship—talent, is essential, and he has no trace of it. The language, however, is throughout correct and good; the author even shows a sense of style."

With difficulty could Alexandr read to the end.

"At last he comes to the point," said Piotr Ivanitch, "and what a rigmarole first! Let us discuss the rest without him."

Alexandr let his hands hang limp. In silence, like a man stunned by an unexpected blow, he gazed with hazy eyes at the opposite wall.

"Come, Alexandr, how do you feel now?" asked Piotr Ivanitch.

Alexandr did not hear this observation.

"Can it, too, be a dream? has this, too, cheated me?" he muttered. "A bitter loss! What, can't one get used to being deceived! But why, I can't understand, was this overwhelming impulse to creative art entrusted to me?"

"Come, come, the impulse was entrusted to you, but the creative art itself they forgot to entrust to you," said Piotr Ivanitch. "I've explained it!"

Alexander answered by a sigh, and sank into thought. Then suddenly he rushed vehemently to open all the drawers, took out several manuscript books, sheets of paper, and scraps, and began in exasperation to throw them into the stove.

"Here, don't forget this!" said Piotr Ivanitch, passing him the sheet of unfinished verses that lay on the table.

"That too may go!" said Alexander in despair, throwing the verses into the stove.

"Is there nothing more? Look round thoroughly," said Piotr Ivanitch, glancing round him; "for once you will be doing a sensible thing. There, what's that in the cupboard in a bundle?"

"In with it," said Alexandr, taking it; "it's my articles on agriculture."

"Don't burn that! give it to me!" said Piotr Ivanitch, holding out his hand, "that's not rubbish."

But Alexandr did not heed him.

"No!" he said bitterly, "since the great power of creation has failed me in the sphere of art, I don't want it |

in the sphere of industry. Fate shall not subdue me to that!"

And the bundle flew into the hearth.

"That's a pity!" observed Piotr Ivanitch, while he rummaged with a finger under the table, to see whether there was not something more to throw in the fire.

"But what shall we do with the novel, Alexandr? It's at home."

"Don't you want it to paste on screens?"

"No, not now. Shouldn't we send Yevsay for it? He has gone to sleep again; look out or they will steal my greatcoat under your very nose! Go to my rooms, ask Vassily there for the thick manuscript-book which is lying in the study on the bureau, and bring it here?"

Alexandr sat, leaning on his elbows, and gazed into the stove. The manuscript was brought. Alexandr looked at the fruit of his six months' labours and grew thoughtful. Piotr Ivanitch noticed it.

"Come, make an end, Alexandr," he said "and then let us talk of something else."

"In with it then, too;" shrieked Alexandr flinging the book into the grate.

Both began to look at it burning, Piotr Ivanitch apparently with satisfaction, Alexandr with grief, almost with tears. Now the uppermost page quivered and started up, as though an unseen hand had turned it back; its edges scorched, it grew black, then contracted and suddenly caught fire; quickly after it a second and a third caught, and then suddenly a few sprang up and burnt in a mass, while those following after them were still white, and two seconds later they, too, began to blacken at the edges.

Alexandr, however, had time to read: "Chapter III." He remembered what was in that chapter, and was smitten with compunction. He rose from his chair and clutched the snuffers to save the fragments of his work. "Perhaps, still—" hope murmured to him.

"Stop, I will do it better with my stick," said Piotr Ivanitch. "You will burn your fingers."

He moved the book into the furthest recesses of the stove, right into the corner. Alexandr stopped in hesitation. The book was thick and not readily subdued by the action of the fire. A thick smoke began to appear

from under it ; the flame sometimes would snatch it from below, lick it at the edge, leave a black stain and sink down again. It was still possible to save it. Alexandr stretched out his hand, but at that very second the flames threw a bright glare upon the chair and Piotr Ivanitch's face and the table ; the whole book was alight and in a minute was burnt up, leaving a heap of black ash amongst which in parts crept little snakes of fire. Alexandr threw down the snuffers.

"All is over !" he said.

"It is over !" repeated Piotr Ivanitch.

"Ah !" ejaculated Alexandr, "I am free !"

"Now I have helped you a second time to clear your rooms," said Piotr Ivanitch, "I hope that this time——"

"It is irrevocable, uncle."

"Amen !" said his uncle, laying his hand on his shoulder. "Come, Alexandr, I advise you not to delay : write at once to Ivan Ivanitch, to send you work on the subject of agriculture. He always says, what is your nephew about ?"

Alexandr shook his head mournfully. "I cannot," he said, "no, I cannot ; all is over."

"What are you going to do now ?"

"What ?" he asked and relapsed into gloom—"now there is nothing to do."

"But it's only in the provinces people are able to do nothing, but here . . . . why did you come here ? It's incomprehensible ! Meantime enough about that. I have a request to make to you."

Alexandr slowly raised his head and looked inquiringly at his uncle.

"I think you know," began Piotr Ivanitch, moving his armchair up to Alexandr, "my partner Surkoff?"

Alexandr nodded assent.

"He is a good fellow, but rather frivolous. His ruling weakness is women. Unluckily, as you have seen for yourself, he's not bad-looking ; that's to say, he is rosy, sleek, tall, always curled and scented, dressed like a fashion-plate ; and so he imagines all the women are out of their senses over him—yes, the coxcomb ! directly he's smitten by a fresh flame, he begins spending money. Then he is taken up with surprises, presents, polite services ; he gives himself up, too, to extravagant smartness, begins to get new

carriages, horses—it's simply ruin! He even ran after my wife. I used not to trouble to send a servant to get theatre tickets; Surkoff was certain to send them—he was invaluable! you couldn't get such a man for any salary; but he bored my wife so I was obliged to get rid of him. Now when he abandons himself to extravagance in this way, his income is not enough for him; he begins to ask me for money—to talk about his capital. "What's your factory to me?" he says; "I never have any cash to spend!" It would be all very well if he would fix on some—hm—but no: he always seeks his *liaisons* in society; he says to me, "I must have an *honourable intrigue*; I can't live without love!" Isn't he an ass? Not far off forty, and he can't live without love!"

Alexandr thought of himself and smiled gloomily.

"Meantime, continued Piotr Ivanitch, "the result is that these so-called honourable intrigues—curse them!—are far more expensive than dishonourable ones. It's not worth the cost, the idiot!"

"What is all this leading up to, uncle?" asked Alexandr. "I don't see what I can do in the matter."

"You shall see. The young widow, Julia Pavlovna Taphaev, has lately returned here from abroad. She is rather good-looking. Surkoff and I were friends of her husband's. Taphaev died abroad. Come, do you guess at last?"

"I guess so much; Surkoff has fallen in love with the widow."

"Yes, he is completely crazy! but what more?"

"More! I don't know."

"What a fellow! Come, I will tell you; Surkoff has twice announced to me that he will soon want money. I at once surmised what this meant, only which quarter the wind was in I couldn't conjecture. I tried to find out what he wanted money for. He hesitated and hesitated; at last said he wanted to rent a suite of rooms in Litaynoy Street, and I recollect that Madame Taphaev lived there, and just opposite the place he has fixed on. Trouble is threatening, and no escape unless you aid me. Now do you guess?"

"Surkoff is asking for money; you have none. You want me to—" He did not say what.

Piotr Ivanitch smiled. Alexandr did not finish the sentence, and looked at his uncle in perplexity.

"No, not at all!" said Piotr Ivanitch. "Am I ever without money? Try applying, when you want some; you will see! But this is what it is; Madame Taphaev through him reminded me of my acquaintance with her husband. I went to see her. She asked me to go often; I promised to do so and said I would bring you; come, now, I hope you understand?"

"Me?" repeated Alexandr, looking with round eyes at his uncle. "I'll be hanged if I understand."

"This is the matter in question; you are to make Madame Taphaev fall in love with you."

Alexandr raised his eyebrows at once and looked at his uncle.

"You are joking, uncle? it's absurd!" he said.

"What is there absurd in it? This is all I want you to do. Lay yourself out to please Madame Taphaev; be attentive, don't let Surkoff be with her *tête-à-tête*—in fact, to put it simply, make him angry. He is vain to folly. Then he will not want his new apartments; his capital will not be touched; the factory business will go on its usual course; come, do you understand? This will be the fifth time I have played him a trick; before, when I was unmarried and rather younger, I used to do it myself, but since now I can't, I get one of my friends to."

"But I am not acquainted with her," said Alexandr.

"For that reason I will introduce you on Wednesday. On Wednesday some of her old friends meet at her house."

"But if she responds to Surkoff's love, then you must allow that my civilities and attentions will make her too angry."

"Oh, that's enough! She is a good sort of woman; when she sees he is a fool, she will cease to take any notice of him, especially before others: her vanity would not allow her to. In this case another will be at hand, cleverer and better-looking; she will be persuaded to get rid of him the quicker. That's why I fixed on you."

Alexandr bowed.

"Surkoff is not so formidable," continued his uncle; but Madame Taphaev sees very few people, so that he might perhaps in her little circle pass for a great man and a wit.

Externals produce a great effect upon women. Even clever women fall in love when a man commits follies for their sake, especially expensive follies."

"But Surkoff, very likely, will not be there on Wednesdays. I might interfere with him a little on Wednesdays ; but how about other days ?"

"Find out all that for yourself ! You must flatter her a bit, play the lover a little. The next time she will invite you, not for Wednesday, but for Thursday or Friday ; you redouble your civility, and I will prepare her a little. I will drop a hint as if you were really . . . . she seems—as far as I can observe—so emotional—she must be over-nervous ; she too, I fancy, is not averse to sympathy—outpourings."

"How is it possible ?" said Alexandr, ruminating. "If I could fall in love myself. . . . but since I cannot there can be no success for the scheme."

"On the contrary, for that very reason it will be successful. If you fell in love, you could not play your part ; she would notice it at once and would proceed to make fools of you both. As it is, you have only to make Surkoff angry ; as soon as he sees that he won't gain the day, he won't spend his money for nothing, and that's all I want. Let me tell you, Alexandr, this is a very important matter to me ; if you do this, you remember those two vases you liked in the factory ? they shall be yours."

"Really, uncle, can you imagine that I——"

"But why should you take trouble and waste your time for nothing ? That's a fine idea ! No ! the vases are very handsome."

"It's a strange commission !" said Alexandr irresolutely.

"I hope you won't refuse to carry it out for me. I am ready on my part to do what I can for you ; when you want money, apply to me. So on Wednesday ! This business will last a month or two. I will tell you when it will not be necessary to do more, then drop it.

"Certainly, uncle, I am ready ; but it's a queer—I won't answer for the success . . . . if I could fall in love myself . . . . then, but since I can't . . . ."

"Indeed, it's very well you can't, that would spoil the whole thing. I answer for the success of it myself. Good-bye."

He went away, and Alexandr sat long by the fire over the ashes of his treasures.

When Piotr Ivanitch returned home, his wife asked him : "How was Alexandr, what of his novel, would he ever be a writer ?"

"No, I have cured him of that for ever."

Adouev told her the contents of the letter he had received with the manuscript, and related how they had burnt everything.

"You have no pity, Piotr Ivanitch !" said Lizaveta Alexandrovna.

"You did well indeed to set him scribbling ! do you mean to tell me he has talent ?"

"No."

Piotr Ivanitch looked at her in surprise.

"Then why did you ?"

"Why, didn't you understand, didn't you guess, all this time ?"

He was silent.

"He doesn't understand, and yet he's a very clever man ! Why has he been cheerful—well, almost happy all this time ? Because he had something to hope for."

"So you have been playing a part with him throughout !"

"I consider it justifiable. But what have you done ? You are absolutely pitiless ; you have taken away his last hope."

"Nonsense ! what last hope ? He has plenty of absurdities still before him."

"What is he to do now ? Will he go about again with downcast looks ?"

"No ! he won't ; it won't come to that : I have given him work to do."

"What ? some translation again about potato-starch ? Do you suppose that can occupy a young man, especially an ardent, enthusiastic one ? With you the head only needs occupation."

"No, my dear, it's not about potato-starch, but something concerning the factory."

## CHAPTER IX

WEDNESDAY arrived. Twelve or fifteen guests were gathered together in Julia Pavlovna's drawing-room. Four young ladies, two bearded foreigners, who had made the hostess' acquaintance abroad, and an officer, formed one group.

Apart from them in an easy-chair was sitting an old man, obviously a retired military officer, with two tufts of grizzled hair under his nose and a number of decorations in his button-hole. He was arguing with an elderly man about some impending contracts.

In the other room an old lady and two men were playing cards. At the piano was seated a very young girl, another was talking to a student.

The Adouevs made their appearance. Few men knew how to enter a drawing-room with such ease and dignity as Piotr Ivanitch. After him, with a certain air of indecision, walked Alexandr.

What a contrast there was between them ! One a whole head taller, well-built, stout, a man of robust temperament with self-confidence in his eyes and manners. But not by a single glance, nor gesture, nor word could one guess the thought or character of Piotr Ivanitch—all was so veiled by his polished manners and power of controlling himself. It seemed as if even his gestures and glances were the result of calculation.

In Alexandr, on the contrary, there was every sign of a weak and soft temperament, and in the changing expression of his face and a certain indolence or slowness and unevenness in his movement, and his lack-lustre eyes, which at once revealed what emotion was agitating his heart, or what thought was stirring in his head. He was of medium height, but thin and pale—pale not by nature, like Piotr Ivanitch, but from the continual agitation of his feelings. His hair did not grow like his uncle's, in bushy thickness on his head and cheeks, but hung down over his temples and on his neck in thin, weak, but exceedingly soft and silky locks of a light-coloured bright hue.

The uncle presented his nephew.

"But is not my friend Surkoff here ?" asked Piotr Ivanitch, looking round with surprise ; "he has forgotten you."

"Oh, no!" replied their hostess; "he often comes to see me. You know, except my late husband's intimate friends, I scarcely see any one."

"Where is he then?"

"He will be here directly. Only imagine, he has promised my cousin and me to get us a box without fail for to-morrow's performance, though they say there's not a chance of getting one, and he has gone about it."

"And he has got it, I will answer for him; he is a genius at that. He will always get one for me, when no influence or favour are of use. How he manages it, and with what money, is his secret."

Surkoff came in. His clothes were new, and in every fold of his linen, in every detail, was clearly discernible the pretension to be a dandy, to excel in every fashion, and even to excel the fashion itself.

"Well, have you got it?" sounded from all sides.

Surkoff was just going to answer, but catching sight of Adouev and his nephew he suddenly paused and looked at them with surprise.

"He suspects!" said Piotr Ivanitch, *sotto voce*, to his nephew.

He pointed out of window at the house opposite.

"Remember that the vases are yours, and be bold," he added.

"Have you tickets for the performance to-morrow?" Surkoff asked Madame Taphaev, going up to her with an air of triumph.

"No."

"*Permit me to hand them to you!*" he continued, and repeated the whole speech of Zagoryetsky from "Sorrow from Wisdom."

The officer's lips were slightly relaxed in a smile. Piotr Ivanitch looked meaningfully at his nephew, and Julia Pavlovna blushed. She began to invite Piotr Ivanitch to her box.

"I am very grateful," he said, "but I shall be in attendance on my wife at the theatre to-morrow; but let me present a young man as a substitute."

He indicated Alexandr.

"I should have liked to ask him too; we are only three, my cousin and I."



"He will make a good substitute for me as well," said Piotr Ivanitch, "and for this scapegrace too, if necessary."

He pointed to Surkoff, and began to say something in an undertone to her. She twice stole a look at Alexandr and smiled while she did so.

"Thank you," replied Surkoff, "only it would have been as well to have proposed such an exchange a little sooner, before the tickets were taken ; I would have considered then how I should be replaced."

"Ah, I thank you very much for your kindness !" said the hostess quickly to Surkoff, "but I did not invite you to the box because you have a stall. You certainly prefer to be just opposite the stage . . . especially at a ballet."

"No, no, you are making fun of me ; you did not think that ; give up a place by you—not for anything !"

"But it is already promised."

"How? To whom?"

"M. René.

She indicated one of the bearded foreigners.

"Oui, madame, m'a fait cet honneur," the latter promptly murmured.

Surkoff gazed open-mouthed at him and then at Madame Taphaev.

"I will change with him ; I will offer him my stall," he said.

"You can try."

The bearded one gesticulated the negative in every limb.

"Allow me to thank you !" said Surkoff to Piotr Ivanitch, with a sidelong look at Alexandr ; "I am indebted to you for this."

"Don't mention it. But won't you care to use my box ? there are only two of us, my wife and I ; you have seen nothing of her for a long while ; you may pay your court to her."

Surkoff turned his back on him in vexation. Piotr Ivanitch quietly took his leave. Julia made Alexandr sit by her and talked to him for a whole hour. Surkoff broke in on the conversation several times, but always in some infelicitous manner. He began to make some remark about the ballet and received the answer "yes" when it ought to have been "no" and *vice versa* ; it was clear that she was not attending to him.

Then he made a sudden transition to oysters, expressing the conviction he had eaten in the morning a hundred and seventy, and did not even receive a glance. He uttered a few commonplaces more and, as nothing came of them, seized his hat and stood about close to Julia, so that she might observe that he was not pleased and was preparing to take his leave. But she did not notice it.

"I am just off!" He said at last expressively, "Good-bye!"

His ill-concealed annoyance was perceptible in his voice.

"So soon?" she replied. "Let us see you to-morrow in the box, if only for one minute."

"What treachery! One minute, when you know that I would not give up a place by you for a place in Paradise."

"If it were a place in a theatre, I believe you."

Now he did not want to go. His vexation vanished at the friendly words Julia had uttered at leave-taking. But every one had seen him make his bow; he had to go, however unwillingly.

Julia Pavlovna was twenty-three or twenty-four years old. Piotr Ivanitch's surmise had been correct; she was, in fact, of a nervous temperament, but this did not prevent her from being a very pretty, clever, and graceful woman. But she was timid, dreamy, sensitive, like most nervous women. Her features were soft and refined, her glance mild, and always thoughtful, often sad without reason, or, if you like, by reason of her nerves.

Her views on life and the world were not at all optimistic; she reflected on the problem of her existence, and arrived at the conclusion that she was not needed here. The bright side of life quite escaped her notice. At the theatre she always chose to see a tragedy, seldom a comedy, never a farce; she was deaf to the strains of any lively song which chanced to reach her, she never smiled at a joke. At times her face expressed exhaustion, not the exhaustion of suffering, or of illness, but rather a luxurious exhaustion. One could see she had been through an inward conflict with some seductive dream, and had been too weak for it. After such a conflict she was a long while silent, mournful, and then all at once would fall into an unaccountable liveliness of spirits, always preserving her characteristic temperament however. What made her lively would not have made any one else lively. All her nerves!

"How well you have divined me," said Madame Taphaev to Alexandr at parting. "No man, not even my husband, has been able to understand my character fully."

The fact was that Alexandr was not far from being of the same type himself. No wonder he felt in his element with her.

"Au revoir."

She gave him her hand.

"I hope now you will find the way here without your uncle?" she added.

The winter came. It had been Alexandr's habit to dine with his uncle every Friday. But four Fridays had now gone by without his making his appearance, nor did he come any other day instead. Lizaveta Alexandrovna grew vexed; Piotr Ivanitch grumbled at his keeping them waiting half an hour beyond dinner-time for him for nothing.

Meanwhile Alexandr was not without occupation; he was carrying out his uncle's commission. Surkoff had long ago given up going to Madame Taphaev's, and declared everywhere that all was over between them. In a stormy interview with Piotr Ivanitch he complained bitterly of Alexandr's treachery and informed the uncle that his nephew was head over ears in love with Madame Taphaev and spent his whole time with her.

Surkoff had not spoken falsely; Alexandr loved Julia. Almost with dread he had felt the first symptoms of this passion, as though they were the symptoms of some plague. He was tortured both by fear and by shame—fear of being again at the mercy of all the caprices of his own and of another's heart; shame before other people, above all before his uncle. He would have given a great deal to be able to hide it from him. Was it long—only three months back—since he had so proudly, so decisively forsown love, had even written in verse an epitaph on this disturbing passion which his uncle had read, and had above all shown openly his contempt for women, and all at once he was again at a woman's feet.

He would gladly have run away to avoid his new passion. But how could he run away? What a contrast between his love for Nadinka and his love for Julia. His first love was nothing more than an unfortunate mistake of a heart which craved for food, and at that age the heart has so little

discrimination ; it takes what comes first. But Julia ! she was not a capricious girl, who did not understand him, or herself, or love. She was a woman in full maturity, weak in body, but ardent in spirit—for love ; she was all love ! She recognised no other conditions as needful for happiness and life. People say love is a pastime ; no, it is a gift ; and Julia had a genius for it. This was the love he had dreamed of—a love conscious, intelligent, but still overmastering, heeding nothing outside its own sphere. Like a rightful sovereign he had stepped proudly into possession of the wealth that was his heritage, and had been recognised with submissive loyalty. What consolation, what bliss, thought Alexandr to know that there is a being in the world, who, wherever she may be, whatever she may be doing, is remembering me, is bending all her thoughts, all her occupations, all her actions to one end and one idea—that of her beloved one ! It is like a second self. Whatever he hears or sees, whatever he comes near, or comes near him, every impression is confided to the other, his second self ; the impression is shared by both, both teach each other, and then the impression confided in this way is received and imprinted on the soul in indelible characters. The second self would renounce her own sensations if they could not be shared or adopted by the other. She likes what the other likes, and hates what the other hates. They exist inseparably in one thought, one feeling ; they have one spiritual sight, one hearing, one mind, one soul.

Julia loved Alexandr still more fervently than he did her.\* She was not even conscious of the full force of her passion, and did not meditate upon it. She was in love for the first time—that would have been nothing, for there is no real falling in love a second time—but the misfortune was that her heart had been over-developed to an impossible degree, cultivated by romances, and prepared not so much for first love as for that romantic passion which exists only in some novels, not in nature, and which therefore is bound always to be unhappy because it is not possible in fact. She could never imagine a calm simple love without tempestuous demonstrations and excesses of tenderness.

Hence arose the romanticism, in which she created a world of her own. Directly anything in the real world was done not in accordance with the canons of her world, her

heart rose in revolt and she was wretched. Her feminine organisation, weak enough without this strain, endured a shock, often a very violent one. Repeated emotions shook her nerves, and at last reduced them to a state of complete derangement. This is the reason of the pensiveness and melancholy without cause, the pessimistic view of life in so many women ; this is why the order of human existence, marvellously and harmoniously framed and carried on according to immutable laws, seems to them a heavy bondage ; in a word, this is why they are frightened by reality.

She had been educated on French novels, music, and theatre going. At eighteen she had first tasted the sweetness of Russian poetry and her imagination was in quest now of an *Onegin*, now of some hero of a masterpiece of the new school—pale, melancholy, disillusioned.

When she had been displayed to the world in the drawing-rooms, with a constantly melancholy gaze, an interesting pallor, an ethereal shape, and slender foot, she attracted the notice of Taphaev, a man with every qualification of a suitor ; that is to say, of respectable rank, good circumstances, with a decoration on his breast—in fact, with a career and a fortune.

The pale, melancholy girl, through some strange inconsistency in his robust temperament, made a strong impression on him. He retreated from the cards at evening parties and fell into unwonted reverie gazing at the half-ethereal shape that flitted before him. When her languid glance fell, of course accidentally, upon him, tried fencer in drawing-room conversation as he was, he grew abashed before the timid girl, attempted to say something to her sometimes and could not. This annoyed him and he resolved to act with more decision through the medium of several aunts.

His inquiries concerning her dowry seemed fairly satisfactory. “Why, we are well matched !” he argued with himself. “I am only forty-five, she is eighteen ; with our fortunes more than two can live comfortably. As to externals she is rather pretty, and I am what is called presentable. Yes, we are a suitable match.”

And so, directly Julia had emerged from childhood, there met her at the very first step a most grievous actuality—an ordinary husband ! How far removed he was from those heroes created for her by her fancy and the poets !

She had passed five years in this *weary dream*, as she called marriage without love, and suddenly freedom and love had appeared. She smiled and stretched out her arms to fold it in feverish embraces, and abandoned herself to her passion as a rider at a fast gallop abandons himself to his horse. He is borne along by the powerful beast, heedless of distance. Breathless, with all things racing past, with the wind blowing fresh in the face, the heart is almost overmastered by the voluptuous sensation. The romantic moment of life had come at last for her ; she began to love that bitter-sweet shudder of the soul, to seek emotion for its own sake, to devise both torture and bliss for herself. She had become a slave to her passion, as men become the slaves of opium, and eagerly drank the sweet poison.

One evening Julia was already agitated by expectation. She stood at the window, and her impatience grew greater every minute. She was pulling a China rose to pieces and throwing the petals on to the ground in her vexation, but her heart failed her ; it was one of her moments of torture. She played a mental game of question and answer ; would he come or would he not, all the power of her mind was bent on solving that hard problem. If it gave an affirmative answer, she smiled, when it did not, she grew pale.

When Alexandr arrived, she had sunk pale and exhausted into an armchair, so powerfully her nerves wrought upon her. When he came up to her . . . impossible to describe the look with which she met him, the rapture which lighted up every feature in an instant, as though they had not met for a year ; though they had seen each other the evening before. Without speaking, she pointed to the clock on the wall ; but he had hardly opened his lips to explain, before she accepted his words without listening to them and forgave him and, forgetting all the agony of suspense, gave him her hand, and they sat long talking and silently gazing at one another. Had not the servant reminded them, they would infallibly have forgotten to have dinner.

What blissfulness ! Alexandr had never dreamed of such full perfection of "sincere outpourings of the heart." In the summer they took walks alone together out of the town ; if people were thronging together anywhere attracted by music, or fireworks, they hovered afar off among the trees, walking hand in hand. In the winter Alexandr arrived at

dinner-time and afterwards they sat side by side by the fire till midnight. Sometimes they ordered a sledge to be brought round, and after flying through the dark streets they hastened back to continue their unfinished conversation by the samovar. Everything that presented itself, every passing stir of thought or feeling—all was felt and done in common.

Alexandr feared meeting with his uncle above all things. He sometimes went to see Lizaveta Alexandrovna, but she never succeeded in moving him to confidences. He was always uneasy lest his uncle should appear and should make him figure in some scene of comedy again and so he always cut his visits short.

Was he happy? Of other men in the like case one may answer yes and no at once, but of him one can only say no. With him love began with suffering. At moments when he succeeded in forgetting the past, he believed in the possibility of happiness, in Julia and in her love. At another time he would grow troubled in the midst of the fire of the most *sincere outpourings*, and would listen with apprehension to her passionate enthusiastic rhapsodies. He fancied that she must certainly change to him, or some other *blow from destiny* would lay waste his glorious world of bliss. Even while he was enjoying the moment of happiness, he knew that it must be bought with suffering, and melancholy took hold of him again.

The winter passed however, summer came, and his love still continued. Julia had become still more fervently devoted to him. There was no change on her part nor any blow from destiny; what did happen was altogether different. His face grew more serene. He had grown used to the idea of the possibility of a permanent attachment. "Though this love is not now so passionate," he thought one day, as he looked at Julia, "yet in compensation it is lasting, perhaps eternal! Yes, there is no doubt of it. Ah, at last I understand thee, Destiny! Thou wouldest atone to me for my past sufferings and lead me, after long wanderings, into a quiet harbour at last. So here is the haven of happiness—Julia!" he cried aloud.

She started.

"What is it?" she asked.

"Nothing! only——"

"Nothing! tell me; you had some idea." Alexandr was obstinate. She continued to press him.

"I thought that to make our happiness complete there is wanting—"

"What?" she asked with anxiety.

"Oh, nothing! an idea occurred to me." Julia was troubled.

"Ah! don't torture me, tell me directly!" she said.

Alexandr spoke musingly in an undertone as though to himself. "To gain the right, not to leave her for an instant, not to go away home—to be everywhere and always with her. To be her rightful protector before the eyes of the world . . . . she to call me hers aloud, without blushing or turning pale . . . . and to be so all our lives, and to take pride in it for ever."

Speaking in this lofty strain, a word at a time, he at last reached the word *marriage*. Julia trembled, then burst into tears.

She gave him her hand with a feeling of unutterable tenderness and gratitude, and they both revived and both began talking at once. It was decided that Alexandr should talk to his aunt and beg for her aid in this complicated matter.

They did not know what to do for joy. It was a glorious, lovely evening. They started off to a place out of town, a wood, and succeeding after much pains in finding a little hillock, where they sat the whole evening looking at the setting sun, and fancying their future way of life, they made plans to limit themselves to a narrow circle of acquaintances and not to waste their time in useless visiting.

They then returned home and began to discuss the future arrangement of their house, the distribution of their rooms, and so on. They got as far as furnishing them. Alexandr proposed to turn her dressing-room into his study so that it might be near their bedroom.

"What kind of furniture would you like in the study?" she said.

"I should like walnut-wood with blue velvet draperies."

"That would be pretty and would not get dirty; one must be sure to choose dark colours for a man's study; light colours are so soon spoiled by smoking. But here, in the little passage which leads from your future study to the bedroom, I will arrange a conservatory—won't it be lovely?"

There I shall place one easy-chair, so that I could sit there to read or work and see you in the study."

"I shall not have to part from you much longer," said Alexandr at parting.

She put her hand over his mouth.

The next day Alexandr set off to see Lizaveta Alexandrovna, to disclose to her what she had long been aware of, and to beg her advice and assistance; begging her, till the matter was concluded, not to say a word about it to Piotr Ivanitch.

The summer was quickly over, and the dull autumn too dragged slowly to an end. Another winter had begun. Adouev's visits to Julia were still as frequent.

It seemed as though she kept a strict account of the days, hours, and minutes which could possibly be spent together. She let no opportunity pass.

"Shall you start early for the office to-morrow?" she would ask sometimes.

"At eleven."

"Then come to me at ten; we will have breakfast together. But could not you stay away altogether. As though they could not do without you!"

"What? duty to one's country," Alexandr would begin.

"A fine idea! You must say that you love and are beloved. Can it be that your chief has never loved? If he has a heart, he will understand or bring your work here; who hinders you from working here?"

Another time she would not let him go to the theatre, and as for seeing friends, she almost always absolutely prevented it. When Lizaveta Alexandrovna came to call on her, for long after Julia could not get over the discovery that Alexandr's aunt was so young and handsome. She had imagined her as an aunt after her own fancy, elderly and plain, like the majority of aunts, and here, if you please, was, a woman of six or seven and twenty and a beauty! She had a scene with Alexandr, and from that time permitted him very rarely to go to his uncle's!

But what was her jealousy and tyranny compared with Alexandr's tyrannising! He was by now convinced of her attachment and saw that her nature did not admit of change or diminution of feeling and still . . . was jealous; and what a

jealousy ! It was not the jealousy that comes of too much love—the jealousy of tears and sighs and complaint springing from the pangs of a heart that dreads to lose its happiness—no, it was a hard, cold, cruel jealousy. He tyrannised over the poor woman from love more than others would have done through hate. He would fancy, for instance, some evening, in the presence of guests, that she did not look long and tenderly or often enough at him, and then, if there were any young man near Julia, or even not a young man, simply a man, or a woman, sometimes even a thing, then woe betide her ! Insult, bitterness, the blackest scorn and reproach were showered upon her. Then she was forced to exculpate herself and to make atonement by various sacrifices and unqualified submission ; she had to give up speaking with this person, give up staying in one place, give up going to another, to put up with the significant smiles and whispers of the sly observant, to blush, to grow pale, to be compromised.

If she received an invitation to go anywhere, before replying she would turn a questioning look on him, and he need only frown for her to decline instantly, pale and trembling. Sometimes he would give her permission—she would prepare, be dressed and ready to get into the carriage —when suddenly, from some caprice of the moment, he would pronounce a threatening veto ! and she would take off her things and countermand the carriage. Afterwards he would, very likely, begin to beg her forgiveness, and offer to go, but too late to dress and order the carriage again. So it had to be given up. He was jealous not only of handsome or intelligent or talented people, but even of the most unattractive, and at last simply of those whose faces he did not like.

But Julia put up with it all. She cut herself off from friends, never went out anywhere, and sat alone with Alexandr. They went on—now of set design—living upon their bliss. Having come to the end of all the natural ordinary delights, she began to devise fresh ones, to diversify that world which is rich enough in pleasures without such aid. What an inventive faculty Julia displayed ! But even that power was exhausted. Repetitions were reached. There was nothing left to desire or to experience.

They had learnt each other's feelings, ways of think-

ing, powers and limitations, and nothing now hindered them from carrying out the plan they had formed.

Sincere outpourings grew less frequent. They sometimes sat for hours together without saying a word. But Julia was happy even in silence. At times she would address Alexandr with a question and receive a "yes" or "no" and be content; if she did not receive even this, she would fasten her eyes upon him; he would smile, and she would be happy again. If he did not smile nor make any reply, she would begin to watch every movement, every look, and interpret it in her own way, and then reproaches would follow.

They had ceased talking of the future because Alexandr was conscious on that subject of an embarrassment, a discomfort which he could not explain to himself and he tried to change the conversation. He began to ponder, to grow thoughtful. The magic circle in which his life was enclosed by love was broken through in places, and the faces of his friends appeared to him from afar, together with a whole sequence of stormy dissipation; at times brilliant balls with crowds of pretty girls, at other times his ever-occupied and busy uncle, his own neglected pursuits.

In such a mood he was sitting one evening at Julia's. There was a snowstorm outside. The snow drifted on the window and stuck in frozen lumps on the panes.

The wind rushed up the chimney and whistled mournfully. In the room the only sound was the monotonous ticking of the clock on the table and now and then a sigh from Julia.

Alexandr, from want of anything to do, cast a glance round the room, then looked at the clock—ten, and he would have to stay another two hours; he yawned. His eyes rested on Julia.

She stood leaning with her back to the fireplace; her white face bent over her shoulder, and followed Alexandr with her eyes, but not with an expression of doubt or interrogation, but one of tenderness, love and happiness. It was clear that she was struggling against a secret emotion, with some dream of sweetness, and she seemed worn out by it.

Her nerves wrought so powerfully upon her that even the thrill of tenderness itself reacted on her with the exhaustion of illness; torture and bliss were inseparable for her.

Alexandr responded with a cold uneasy stare. He went up to the windows and began to drum lightly on the pane with his finger, looking into the street.

From the street a mingled sound of voices and the rattle of carriages reached them. At all the windows were bright lights and flitting shadows. He fancied that where the light was brightest there was a lively party assembled ; there, most likely, there was a lively interchange of thoughts and ardent, versatile feelings, there life was noisy and merry. And over there at that dimly lighted window no doubt some noble, hardworking man was sitting busily occupied. And Alexandr began to reflect that for two years now he had been dragging on an indolent, senseless existence—two years gone from the sum-total of life—and all through love ! Here he began an onslaught on love.

"And what a love !" he thought, "a sleepy, spiritless sort of love. This woman gave way to her feelings without a struggle, without an effort, without opposition, like an unresisting victim. A weak woman, lacking character, she would have bestowed her love on the first man who came across her ; if it had not been me, she would have loved Surkoff exactly the same, indeed she had already begun to love him. Yes, it's no good for her to justify herself, I saw it ! If some one had appeared a little more adroit and active than I, she would have yielded to him ; it's simply immorality ! Is that love ? Where is the sympathy of souls of which sentimental people are always preaching ? and what an affinity of souls there seemed to be in our case ! it seemed as though they would be one for ever, and what has it come to ? Devil knows what it is, there's no understanding it !" he muttered with irritation.

"What are you doing there ? what are you thinking about ?" asked Julia.

"Oh, nothing !" he said yawning, and sat down on the sofa rather further from her, clutching with one hand a corner of the embroidered cushion.

"Sit here, closer."

He did not move, and made no answer.

"What is the matter with you ?" she said, going up to him ; "you are unbearable to-day."

"I don't know," he said drowsily ; "I'm somehow—as if I——"

He did not know what answer to make to her and to himself. He had not yet made thoroughly clear to himself what was happening to him.

-She sat down near him, began to talk of the future, and by degrees grew animated. She drew a happy picture of family life, jestingly for a little time, but with a very tender conclusion.

"You—my husband! look," she said, pointing round, "soon all this will be yours. You will be the master here in the house, as you are already in my heart. Now I am independent, I can do what I like, and go wherever I please, but then nothing here can stir from its place without your permission; I myself shall be in bondage to your will. What a sweet slavery! Rivet the chains as soon as may be; when is it to be?"

"All my life I dreamed of such a man, of such a love, and now my dream has come true, and happiness is near. I can scarcely believe it. Do you know it seems like a dream to me. Is it not a recompense for all my past sufferings?"

It was torture to Alexandr to listen to these words.

"But suppose I got tired of you?" he asked suddenly, trying to give a jesting accent to his voice.

"I should box your ears," she said, pinching his ear; then she sighed and grew pensive even at the suggestion in jest. He did not speak.

"But what's the matter with you?" she asked suddenly and insistently; "you don't speak, you scarcely hear what I say, you look away."

Then she moved up to him and, laying her hand on his shoulder, began to speak softly, almost in a whisper, on the same subject, but not so positively. She recalled the beginning of their intimacy, the beginning of their love, her first feelings and first happiness. She almost fainted from the tenderness of her emotion; and in her pale cheeks there were two spots of crimson, which by degrees grew hot, her eyes glowed, then grew languid and half-closed; her bosom heaved. She spoke hardly audibly, and with one hand played with Alexandr's soft hair, then looked straight into his eyes. He gently disengaged his head from her hand, drew a comb out of his pocket, and carefully combed the locks she had ruffled. She got up and looked fixedly at him.

"What is the matter with you, Alexandr?" she said uneasily.

"There she is at it again! how can I tell?" he thought, but did not speak.

"Are you bored?" she said, and in her voice was a tone of question and of doubt.

"Bored!" he thought, "the word is found! Yes, it's terrible deadly boredom! that's the worm which has been gnawing at my heart for months. Good God, what am I to do? and she talks of love, of marriage. How can I undeceive her!"

She sat down to the piano and began to play some of his favourite pieces. He did not listen, but kept thinking his own thoughts.

Julia let her hands fall. She sighed, wrapped herself in a shawl, and flung herself into the other corner of the sofa, and from there watched Alexandr with mournful eyes.

He took up his hat.

"Where are you going?" she said with surprise.

"Home."

"It is not eleven o'clock yet."

"I have to write to mamma; I haven't written to her for a long while."

"A long while! you wrote the day before yesterday." He did not speak; there was nothing for him to say. He really had written and had incidentally mentioned it to her at the time, but had forgotten it; but love does not forget the smallest detail. In the eyes of love everything which relates to the beloved object is a fact of importance. A complex web is woven in a lover's mind from observations, subtle imaginations, recollections, and surmises about everything which surrounds the beloved, which takes place in his sphere, or has any bearing upon him. One word, a hint—no need of a hint! a glance, a scarcely perceptible movement of the lips—is enough for love to found a conjecture on, then to pass from it to imagination, and thence to a decisive conclusion, and then to suffer torture or to be blissful in his own thoughts. The logic of lovers, sometimes false, sometimes amazingly correct, quickly builds up an edifice of conjectures and suspicions, but the strength of love still more quickly levels it to the ground; often a single

smile is enough for this, a tear, two or three words, and the suspicions are gone.

This kind of supervision there is no means of lulling to sleep or deceiving. The lover at one time suddenly takes some idea into his head which no one else would have thought of in his wildest dreams, at another time he fails to see what is taking place under his nose ; at one time acute to clairvoyance, at another short-sighted to blindness.

Julia leaped up from the sofa, like a cat and seized him by the hand.

"What does it mean? where are you going?" she asked.

"Nothing, nothing, I assure you ; there, I simply want to go to bed ; I have had too little sleep lately : that's all."

"Too little sleep ! when you told me only this morning that you had had nine hours' sleep, and that you even had a headache from too much sleep ?"

Unlucky again.

"Well, my head does ache," he said, a little taken aback, "and that's why I am going."

"But after dinner you said your headache had gone."

"Good Heavens, what a memory you have ! It's unbearable ! Very well, I simply want to go home."

"Aren't you comfortable here? What have you there, at home?"

Looking him in the eyes, she shook her head incredulously. He succeeded somehow in quieting her and went away.

"What if I don't go to Julia's to-day?" was the question Alexandr put to himself when he waked up the next morning.

He paced three times up and down the room. "I declare I won't go !" he announced resolutely.

"Yevsay, bring me my things." And he went out to stroll about the town.

"How nice, how jolly it is to be walking alone !" he thought ; "to go wherever one pleases, to stop to read the sign-boards, to look into the shop windows, to walk to and fro—it's really very pleasant ! Freedom is a precious thing ! Yes ! that's just it ; freedom in a broad high sense means —walking alone !"

He tapped with his stick on the pavement, and gaily

greeted his acquaintance. As he walked down the Morskaya Street, he saw a face he knew at the window of one of the houses. His acquaintance beckoned to him to come in. He looked and saw it was the Duomo and went in, dined there and stayed till the evening ; in the evening he set off for the theatre and from the theatre to supper. He tried not to remember home at all ; he knew what was awaiting him there.

As he anticipated on his return he found some half-a-dozen notes on the table and a page asleep in the hall. The boy had been ordered not to go away till he had seen him. The notes were full of reproaches, questions and traces of tears. The next day he had to go and make his excuses. He talked about business at the office. They arrived at some sort of a reconciliation.

Every three days, the same thing was repeated in one direction or another. And so again and again. Julia began to grow thinner, never went out and saw no one, but she said nothing, for Alexandr was irritated by reproaches.

A fortnight later Alexandr had arranged to spend the day with friends, but in the morning he received a note from Julia, begging him to spend the whole day with her and to come rather earlier. She wrote that she was ill and in low spirits, that her nerves were out of order, &c. He was irritated ; however, he went to inform her that he could not stay with her, that he had a lot of business to attend to.

"Oh, of course : a dinner at the theatre, tobogganning—very important business," she said languidly.

"What does that mean ?" he asked, with annoyance ; "so, you spy upon me, it seems ; that I won't put up with."

He got up and was going.

"Stop a minute, listen !" she said, "I have something to say."

"I've no time."

"One minute ; sit down."

Unwillingly he sat down on the edge of a chair.

Clasping her hands she gazed uneasily at him, as though she were trying first to read on his face the answer to what she wanted to ask.

He writhed in his seat from impatience.

"Make haste ! I've no time to spare !" drily.

She sighed.

"You don't love me then?" she asked, with a slight movement of the head.

"The old story!" he said, stroking his hat with his hands.

"How sick you are of it!" she answered.

He got up and with rapid strides began to walk up and down the room. In an instant a sob was heard.

"That is all that was wanting!" he said almost violently, standing still near her, "you have tortured me enough!"

"I torture you!" she cried, and sobbed the more.

"It's unendurable!" said Alexandr, getting ready to go.

"There, I won't, I won't!" she said, hurriedly wiping away her tears; "see, I am not crying, only don't go away, sit down."

She tried to smile, but the tears would still trickle down her cheeks. Alexandr felt sorry for her. He sat down and swung his legs. He began to put question after question to himself, and arrived at the conclusion that he had grown cold and did not love Julia. But why? God only knows! She loved him more passionately every day; was it not because of that? Good Heavens, what an irony of fate! All the conditions of happiness were there. There was no obstacle to hinder them, there was not even any other feeling to draw him away, yet he had grown cold! Oh, life! But how should he soothe Julia? Was he to sacrifice himself? to drag through a long wearisome existence with her; to play a part he could not, but not to play a part would mean every minute to see tears, to hear reproaches, to torture her and himself. . . . Should he begin to explain to her at once his uncle's theories about the changeable nature of the feelings—a likely idea! she was weeping already, when she knew nothing—but there! What was to be done?

Julia, seeing that he did not speak, took his hand and gazed into his eyes. He slowly turned away and gently disengaged his hand. He not only felt no attraction, but at her touch a cold and unpleasant shiver ran through his frame. She redoubled her caresses. He did not respond to them, and grew even more cold and sullen. She suddenly snatched her hand away from him and grew crimson. Womanly pride, outraged self-love, shame were stirred in

her. She raised her head, drew herself up, and blushed from vexation.

"Leave me!" she said in broken tones.

He went off at once without any kind of reply. But as the sound of his steps began to die away she rushed after him!

"Alexandr Fedoritch! Alexandr Fedoritch!" she cried.

He came back.

"Where are you going?"

"Why, you just told me to go."

"And you were glad to escape. Stop!"

"I've no time!"

She took him by the hand, and again melted into tender, tearful words and prayers. He showed no sympathy in look, or word, or gesture, but stood as though he were made of wood, shifting from one leg to the other. His coldness drove her to frenzy. Threats and reproaches were showered on him. Who would have recognised in her the gentle, nervous woman? Her hair fell down in disorder, her eyes glowed with feverish brilliance, her cheeks were flushed, her features were strangely distorted—"How ugly she is!" thought Alexandr, looking at her with a grimace.

"I will be revenged on you!" she said. "Do you think you can so easily trifle with a woman's destiny? and you shall see what I will do! you will be sick of your life! How consoling now to hear of your ruin.... I could kill you myself!" she shrieked wildly, furiously.

"How stupid it is, how absurd!" thought Alexandr, shrugging his shoulders.

Seeing that Alexandr remained unmoved by her threats, she suddenly changed to a gentle, pathetic tone, then gazed silently at him.

"Have pity on me!" she began to say; "don't cast me aside; what can I do now without you? I could not bear separation. I should die! Think a little: women love very differently from men; more tenderly, more passionately. For them love is everything; and especially is it so for me; other women like flirtation, society, bustle and activity; I was never suited for that—mine is a different character. I love quiet, solitude, books, music, and you more than everything in the world."

Alexandr showed his impatience.

"Very well ! you do not love me," she went on more quickly, "but fulfil your promise ; marry me, only be mine, you shall be free : do what you like, even love whom you like, if only I may sometimes—now and then—see you. Oh, for God's sake, pity me, pity me !"

She burst into tears and could not go on. Her emotion had exhausted her ; she fell on to the sofa, her eyes closed and her teeth clenched, while her mouth worked convulsively. She fell into hysterics. An hour later she recovered and came to herself. Her maid was bustling about near her. She looked round. "But where ?" . . . . she asked.

"He has gone away !"

"Gone away !" she repeated dejectedly, and sat a long while silent and motionless.

The next day note after note was despatched to Alexandr. He did not make his appearance nor send any answer. The third and the fourth day it was the same. Julia wrote to Piotr Ivanitch, and asked him to come to her about important business ; his wife she did not like, because she was young and handsome, and happened to be Alexandr's aunt.

Piotr Ivanitch found her seriously ill, almost at death's door. He set off to see Alexandr.

"What a hypocrite ! fie !" he said.

"How so !" said Alexandr.

"Just look at him, as though it were no concern of his ! He does not know how to make a woman love him indeed ! why, he's driven her wild about him !"

"I don't understand, uncle——"

"What is there you don't understand ? you understand well enough ! I have been at Madame Taphaev's ; she has told me all."

"What !" stammered Alexandr in violent confusion. "She has told you all !"

"Yes, all. How she loves you ! You lucky fellow ! Well, you were always lamenting that you could not find passion ; here you have passion ; be comforted !"

"What did you go to see her about ?"

"She asked me, and complained to me of you. Certainly I wonder you're not ashamed to neglect her like this ? for four days you have not set eyes on her . . . . it's no

joking matter. She is pale, dying ! Come, go directly to her."

"What did you say to her?"

"Oh, the ordinary things, that you, too, love her to distraction, that you have long been seeking a sympathetic heart ; that you are passionately fond of sincere outpourings ; and that you, too, cannot live without love. I said that she was uneasy without cause ; that you would come back. I advised her not to coop you up too much, to let you amuse yourself a little sometimes, else, I told her, you will begin to bore each other—in fact, what is usually said on such occasions. I cheered her up so that she proceeded to tell me you had decided to be married, that my wife had already helped in the matter. But never a word to me—these women ! Well, thank God she has something of her own ; you can spend it between you. I told her that you would certainly carry out your engagement. . . . I did my best for you just now, Alexandr, in gratitude for the service you did me. I convinced her that you love so passionately, so tenderly."

"What have you done, uncle !" said Alexandr, changing countenance. "I—I don't love her any more ! I don't want to marry her ! I feel cold to her, as cold as ice ! I'd sooner drown myself than——"

"Pooh, pooh !" said Piotr Ivanitch, with simulated incredulity ; "is it you I am listening to ? Didn't you say—do you remember?—that you despise human nature, especially feminine human nature ; that there was no heart in the world deserving of you ? What more did you say ? Let me remember——"

"For Heaven's sake, not a word more, uncle ; that is reproach enough ; what need to moralise farther ? Do you think I don't understand. O man, man !"

He suddenly began to laugh, and his uncle joined in.

"Well, that's better !" said Piotr Ivanitch ; "I said you would come to laugh at yourself, and here——"

And both laughed again.

"But I say," Piotr Ivanitch went on, "what is your opinion now of that—what's-her-name—Pashenka, was it?—with the wart ?"

"Uncle that's not magnanimous."

"No; I only speak of it to discover whether you still despise her just the same?"

"Stop that, for Heaven's sake, and help me instead to get out of an awful position. You are so sensible, so judicious——"

"Oh, now for compliments and flattery! No, you get along and marry her."

"Not for anything, uncle! I entreat you, aid me."

"Come, don't worry; I have helped you already," said his uncle. "Don't be uneasy; Madame Taphaev will not trouble you further."

"What have you done? What have you told her?"

"It's too long to repeat, Alexandr; it would be tedious."

"But most likely you have been saying all sorts of things to her. She will hate and despise me."

"What does it matter to you? I quieted her—that was enough; I told her that you weren't capable of love; that it wasn't worth while troubling about you."

"What did she say?"

"She is positively glad now that you have deserted her."

"What! glad!" said Alexandr gloomily.

"Yes, glad."

"Did you notice no regret, no grief in her? was she indifferent? This is beyond everything."

He began to pace the room uneasily.

"Glad, calm!" he repeated; "that's a nice idea! I will go to her this instant."

"Here's a man!" observed Piotr Ivanitch, "this is the heart; you may live among men—you will be all right. But were you not afraid of her sending for you? did you not beg for assistance? and now you are upset because she isn't dying of grief at being separated from you."

"How mean I am, how worthless!" said Alexandr, falteringly; "I have no heart! I am pitiful, base in spirit!"

"And all through love!" interposed Piotr Ivanitch. "Such a stupid pursuit; leave it to fellows like Surkoff. But you are a sensible boy; you might busy yourself with something of more consequence. You have done enough running after women."

"But you love your wife, I suppose?"

"Yes, of course. I am very well suited to her, but it

does not prevent me from doing my work. Well, good-bye, come in."

Alexandr sat perplexed and gloomy. Yevsay stole up to him with a boot, into which he thrust his hand.

"Kindly look at it, sir," he said tenderly, "what blacking! you can shine it like a mirror, but it costs only six-pence!"

Alexandr started, looked mechanically at the boot, then at Yevsay.

"Get away!" he said, "you idiot!"

"We ought to send some to the country," Yevsay began again.

"Get away, I tell you, go away!" shrieked Alexandr, almost in tears; "you bother me . . . . you and your boots will worry me into my grave . . . . you're . . . . a savage!"

Yevsay quickly vanished into the ante-room.

## CHAPTER X.

"Why is it Alexandr does not come to see us? I haven't seen him these three months," said Piotr Ivanitch to his wife as he came home one day.

"I have quite given up the idea of ever seeing him," she replied.

"Why, what's the matter with him? Is he in love again, or what?"

"I don't know."

"Is he quite well?"

"Yes."

"Please write to him that I want to have a little conversation with him. There will be changes among them at his office again, and I fancy he does not know it. I don't understand such carelessness."

"I have written and invited him ten times already. He says he has no time, but all the same he plays draughts with some queer companions and goes out angling. You had better go yourself; you would find out what's wrong with him."

"What is he up to now? There is no help for it, I will go. But it's the last time, I declare."

Piotr Ivanitch, too, found Alexandr on the sofa. On his uncle's entrance he got up and took a seat.

"Are you unwell?" inquired Piotr Ivanitch.

"So, so," replied Alexandr, yawning.

"What are you doing?"

"Nothing."

"And you can exist without doing anything?"

"Yes."

"I've been told to-day, Alexandr, that Ivanoff is leaving your department!"

"Yes, he's leaving."

"Who will succeed him?"

"They say Ichenko."

"And what about you?"

"They don't think enough of me. And probably I am not fitted for it."

"Good Heavens, Alexandr, you must bestir yourself. You ought to go and see the director."

"No," said Alexandr, shaking his head.

"But this is now the third time you've been passed over."

"I don't care; so be it."

"Come, think a little, what will you say when your former subordinate begins to give you orders, or when he comes in and you have to get up and salute him?"

"Why, I shall get up and salute him."

"But your self-respect?"

"I have none."

"But you have some interests of some kind in life?"

"None at all. I had and they are over."

"That cannot be; one set of interests replaces another. Why are they over for you, and not over for other people? It would be rather early for that, I should say; you are not yet thirty."

Alexandr shrugged his shoulders.

"Do remember that you, like every one else, ought to make for yourself a career of some kind. Do you sometimes think of that?"

"Of course! I have made it already."

"How so?"

"I have marked out for myself a sphere of activity and I don't wish to go beyond it. I am a householder here; that's my career. I am fed and clothed; I have enough for that."

"And very badly clothed now," remarked his uncle.  
"And is that all you want?"

"Yes, all."

"But the attraction of intellectual and spiritual pleasures, and art?" Piotr Ivanitch was beginning mimicking Alexandre's intonation. "You might go forwards; yours is a higher vocation; your duty summons you to noble activity. And your strivings for what is higher—have you forgotten?"

"Confound them!" said Alexandre uneasily. "You too, uncle have begun to be high-flown. This never attacked you before. Isn't it for my benefit? It's trouble thrown away! I did strive for something . . . do you recollect what came of it?"

"I remember that you wanted to be a minister all of a sudden, and then an author. Still you have proved that you can work and be something in time. But it's long and weary waiting, we want it all at once; we don't succeed, and we lose heart."

"But I don't want to strive for something higher. I have found a place for myself, and I shall stay there for ever. I have found some simple, unsophisticated people; it's no matter that they're limited in intellect. I play draughts and go fishing with them—and it's capital! Let me be punished, as you consider, for it, let me be deprived of rewards, honour, money, a higher vocation—and all that you are so in love with. I have renounced for ever——"

"You want, Alexandre, to pretend to be contented and indifferent to everything, but your vexation effervesces even in your words; you are speaking as though with tears instead of words. You are full of bitterness; you don't know what to vent it on, because you alone are to blame."

"So be it!" said Alexandre.

Piotr Ivanitch looked at him without speaking. He had grown thin again. His eyes were sunken. On his cheeks and brows premature wrinkles were visible.

His uncle was alarmed. Spiritual suffering he scarcely believed in, but he was afraid that the beginning of some physical disease lay hid under this exhaustion. "I declare," he thought, "the boy is going out of his mind, and then to break it to his mother; what a correspondence! she would be certain to come up here too."

"Come in and see us," he said ; "my wife is very anxious to see you."

"I can't, uncle."

"Is it nice of you to forget her ?"

"Perhaps it's very nasty of me, but, for goodness' sake, excuse me and don't expect me now. Wait a little while longer, I will come."

"Well, as you please," said Piotr Ivanitch. With a wave of the hand he went off home.

He told his wife he gave up Alexandr and that he must do as he likes—that he, Piotr Ivanitch, had done all he could, and now washed his hands of him.

After his rupture with Julia, Alexandr had flung himself into a whirl of riotous amusements.

In a little while his freedom with noisy festivities and a life without care made him forget Julia and his troubles. But all this constant repetition of suppers at restaurants, with the same blear-eyed faces, of the stupid and drunken talk of his companions day after day, with his stomach constantly out of order into the bargain—no, this was not to his taste. The delicate organisation of body and soul in Alexandr, attuned to a note of melancholy and pathos, could not endure these dissipations.

He shut himself up alone in his room, in solitude with his forgotten books. But his book fell out of his hands, and his pen refused to obey the breath of inspiration. Schiller, Goethe, Byron showed him the dark side of mankind ; the bright side he did not notice—that he had not attained to.

But how happy he had been at times in that room ! he had not been alone then ; a vision of splendour had been near him then, by day it had beckoned him to earnest work, by night it had kept watch over his pillow. Dreams had been his companions in those days, the future had been clothed in mist, but not a gloomy mist presaging storm, but the mist of morning veiling the brilliance of dawn. Behind this mist something was hidden, doubtless, happiness. But now, not his room only, but the whole world was empty for him, and within himself all was chill dreariness.

Looking at life, questioning his heart and his head, he perceived with horror that there was neither within or without a single ideal left nor a single bright hope ; all now lay

behind him ; the mist had parted ; behind it stretched the desert of bald reality. Good Heavens ! what an immense void ! what a dreary comfortless prospect !

The past was over, the future was ruined, happiness was not ; all had been a dream, and still he had to live !

What he wanted he did not know himself ; but how much he did not want !

His head seemed as though it were in a fog. He did not sleep, but seemed in a lethargy. Disquieting thoughts were drawn out in an unending series in his brain. He thought : "what could attract him ? Seductive hope, happy heedlessness, was no more ! he knew all that was before him. Success, a struggle along the path that leads to honour ? What was there in that for him ? Was it worth while for twenty or thirty years to fight like a fish against the ice ? And would it cheer his heart ? A consolation truly to the spirit for a few men to bow low to one while they are cursing one very likely in their hearts !

What of love ? Ah, that was worse ! He knew it by heart, and had lost even the power of loving. And as though in irony his memory officially recalled to him Nadinka, not the innocent, simple-hearted Nadinka—that was never recalled to him—but invariably Nadinka the traitress, with all her surroundings : the trees, the little path, the flowers, and among all this the wily one, with the smile he knew so well, with her blush of shame and passion—and all for another, not for him !

With a frown he clutched at his heart.

He believed in no one and nothing, and never forgot himself in enjoyment ; he tasted pleasure as a man without appetite tastes dainties, coldly, knowing that satiety presses close upon it, that nothing can ever fill up the void in his heart ; that if one trusts oneself to passion, it will deceive one and only agitate the heart, and add fresh wounds to the old ones. When he saw people united by love forgetting everything in their happiness, he smiled ironically and thought : "Wait a little, you will change your minds."

He dreaded feeling a desire, knowing that often at the moment of attaining what one desires, Fate snatches happiness out of one's hands, and substitutes something altogether

different, some wretched thing which one does not want at all, and if in the end it does grant one's desire, it first tortures, wearies out, and degrades one in one's eyes, and then throws it as men throw sop to a dog after just making him crawl to the dainty morsel, look at it, balance it on his nose, roll it in the dust, stand on his hind paws and then—good dog, have it !

He dreaded the periodical interchange of happiness and unhappiness in life. He foresaw no pleasures, but pain was always inevitably before one ; there was no escaping that—all men were subject to that general law ; to all, as he thought, there were allotted equal parts of pain and happiness. Happiness was over for him ; and what kind of happiness was it ? A phantom, a cheat. Only pain was real, and that was all before him. There were sickness and old age, and losses and perhaps even want. All these *strokes of destiny*, as his auntie in the country called them, were in store for him ; and what were the compensations ? His high poetic vocation had forsaken him ; they impose a wearisome burden on him, and call it duty ! All that is left him are the pitiful rewards—money, comfort, rank. Confound them !

So he brooded in melancholy, and saw no outlet from this slough of doubt.

His despair drew the tears from his eyes—tears of mortification, envy, ill-will to all men—the bitterest of tears. He felt acute regret that he had not listened to his mother, and had ever left his obscure country place.

" My mother had a presentiment at heart of sorrow to come," he thought ; " there these unquiet moods would have slept an eternal sleep ; there there would have been none of the troubled ferment of this complex life. There, too, all the human passions and feelings would have come to me ; vanity and pride and ambition—all would have occupied my thoughts on a small scale within the narrow limits of the district, and all would have been satisfied. The first in the district. Yes, all is relative. The divine spark of heavenly fire which in greater or less degree burns in all of us, would have shone there unseen in me, and would quickly have been extinguished in a life of indolence, or would have passed into the warmth of attachment to wife and children. Existence would not have been polluted. I

should have pursued my way proudly ; the path of life would have been easy : it would have seemed simple and comprehensible to me ; life would have been within my powers : I should not have come into conflict with it. And love ? It would have blossomed happily and have filled my whole life. Sophia would have gone on loving me tranquilly. I should not have lost faith in anything, I should have picked the roses without recognising the thorns, without knowing anything of jealousy for want of a rival ! Why was I so blindly and overmasteringly drawn to what was far off and obscure, to unequal and uncertain conflict with destiny ? And how well I understood men and life in those days ! There I should have understood them still as well without an inkling of anything. I expected so much of life there, and without a persistent analysis of it I should have been expecting something of it still even up to now. How many treasures I discovered in my soul ; what has become of them ? I have bartered them with the world, I have given away the sincerity of my heart, my first innermost passion ; and what have I received for it ? a bitter disillusionment. I have learnt that all is a cheat, all is transitory, that one cannot depend either on oneself or on others, and I have begun to be afraid of others and of myself. And in the midst of this analysis I cannot acknowledge the pettiness of life and yet be contented, like my uncle and many others. And that's my present position ! ”

Now he desired only one thing—forgetfulness of the past, tranquillity, the slumber of the soul. He grew more and more indifferent to life, and looked at everything with drowsy eyes. From crowds of people and the noise of assemblies he found only *ennui*, and he fled from them, but *ennui* followed him.

He was amazed that people could be light-hearted and incessantly occupy themselves with something or other, and everyday be attracted by fresh interests. It seemed strange to him that all men did not go about as wearily as he, did not weep, and did not—instead of chattering about the weather—talk of their pain and their respective sufferings—if they did talk of it, it was always of a pain in their legs or some other part, rheumatism or some such ailment. They were only anxious about their body—as for their soul—it was never even mentioned ! “Empty, wretched creatures—

animals!" he thought. Yet sometimes he fell to pondering deeply. "There are so many of them, these wretched creatures," he said to himself with some uneasiness, "and I am only one; can it be—all of them are empty—wrong—and I?"

Then it struck him that it might almost be that he alone was to blame, and this made him even more unhappy.

His old acquaintances he ceased to visit; meeting new faces chilled him. After his conversation with his uncle, he sank into still deeper lethargy; his soul was wrapped in complete slumber. He fell into a kind of stony indifference, lived in indolence, and obstinately cut himself off from everything that even reminded him of the civilised world.

"What does it matter how one lives so long as one lives!" he said. "Every one is free to take life as he likes, and then to die."

He sought the society of men of sour turn of mind, of embittered feelings, and found relief for his heart in listening to their spiteful epigrams on destiny; or wasted his time with people inferior to him both in intelligence and education, most frequently of all with Kostyakoff, the old man whom Zayeshaloff had tried to introduce to Piotr Ivanitch.

Kostyakoff lived in Peskae, and walked about the street there in a shiny cap and a dressing-gown, tied round the waist with a pocket-handkerchief. With him lived a cook with whom he used to play cribbage in the evening.

If a fire broke out, he was the first man to be on the spot and the last to go away. If he passed by a church where a funeral service was being conducted, he would force his way through the crowd to take a look at the face of the corpse, and then would proceed to follow the funeral to the cemetery.

He was devoted to ceremonies of every kind, whether mournful or festive in character; he liked also to be present at any extraordinary events, such as street brawls, fatal accidents, roofs falling in, &c., and read with peculiar enjoyment the account of such occurrences in the newspapers. Besides this, he used to read medical books, "so as to know what is in man," he used to say. In the winter Alexandr used to play draughts with him, and in the summer he used to make excursions out of town to go fishing with him. The old man would talk of one thing and another. When

they went into a field, he talked of the crop and of sowing ; on the bank of the river he talked of fish, of navigation ; in the street, he made remarks about the houses, about architecture, and building materials and rents . . . no abstract ideas of any kind. He looked on life as a good thing if he had money, and *vice versa*. Such a man was quite without danger for Alexandr ; he could not awaken any spiritual emotion.

Alexandr tried as zealously to mortify the spiritual element in himself as hermits try to mortify the flesh. At the office he was silent ; if he met acquaintances he exchanged two or three words and, on the pretext of want of time, made his escape. His friend Kostyakoff, however, he saw every day. Sometimes the old man would spend the whole day at Adouev's, sometimes he would invite him home to eat cabbage soup. He had already taught Alexandr to make beverages and to cook pickled cabbage and tripe. Later they would set off together somewhere in the surrounding neighbourhood to the open country. Kostyakoff had many acquaintances everywhere. With the peasants, he would talk about their way of living, with the women he would joke, and was precisely the merry fellow that Zayeshaloff had eulogised him for being. Alexandr gave him full liberty to talk, but for his part was mostly silent.

He already felt that ideas of the world he had abandoned visited him less frequently, moved more slowly through his head, and meeting nothing to reflect them or resist them in his surroundings, did not find utterance and died away without coming to anything. His soul was in as wild and sterile a condition as an overgrown garden. He had still not quite attained the state of complete petrifaction. A few months more, and it would be over ! But this is what happened.

One day Alexandr had gone fishing with Kostyakoff. Kostyakoff in a full-skirted overcoat and leather foraging cap, after setting on the bank several hooks of various sizes, with floats and little bells and reels, was smoking a short pipe, and without daring so much as to wink, was keeping guard over the whole battery of hooks, including Adouev's as well, for Alexandr was standing leaning against a tree and gazing in an opposite direction. They stood thus a long while in silence.

" You've got a bite ! look, Alexandr Fedoritch," said Kostyakoff suddenly in a whisper.

Adouev looked at the water, and turned away again.

" No, it's the current makes you think so," he said.

" Look, look !" cried Kostyakoff ; " it's a bite, upon my soul, it's a bite. Ah, ah ! pull it up, pull it up ! hold it ! "

The float did actually plunge under water, and after it the line, and after the line the rod too began to slip from behind the bushes. Alexandr clutched the rod, and then the line.

" Softly, gently there, not so . . . . what are you doing ?" cried Kostyakoff, laying hold of the line. " My dear sir, what a weight ; don't hold it ; let it go, let it go, or it will break. There so, to the right, to the left ; here, to the bank. Let it go ! further ; now draw it up, draw it up, only not all at once ; that's the way—so."

A huge pike appeared above the surface of the water. It twisted quickly with a flash of silver scales, beat its tail to right and to left, and sprinkled them both with drops. Kostyakoff was quite pale with excitement.

" What a pike !" he cried almost in tones of awe, and stretching over the water he fell down stumbling over his hooks, and with both hands tried to capture the pike as it was wriggling back to the water.

" Come to the bank, this way, further ! there now, it's ours, and no wriggling back. See, it's as slippery as the devil ! Ah, what a pike ! "

" Ah !" some one repeated from behind.

Alexandr turned round. Two paces from them stood an old man, and on his arm a tall pretty young girl, with her head uncovered and a sunshade in her hands. Her brows were slightly knitted. She was bending a little forward and following every movement of Kostyakoff with great interest. She had not even noticed Alexandr.

This unexpected apparition rather disturbed Adouev. He let the rod slip out of his hands, the pike went flop into the water, gracefully shook its tail, and was off into the depths, drawing the line after it. All this took place in a second.

" Alexandr Fedoritch ! what are you doing," Kostyakoff shouted like a madman, beginning to seize the line. He kept hold of it, but drew out only the end, without the hook and without the pike.

Quite pale, he turned to Alexandr, showed him the end of the line, and looked furiously at him for a minute without speaking, then he spat on the ground.

"I will never go fishing with you again ; I'll be damned if I do," he ejaculated, and turned away to his own hooks.

Meanwhile the young girl had noticed that Alexandr was looking at her ; she blushed and was stepping away. The old man, apparently her father, bowed to Adouev. Adouev responded sullenly to his salutation, threw down the hooks and sat down some ten paces away on a bench under a tree.

"Even here there is no peace !" he thought. "Here is some Oedipus with an Antigone. Woman again ! There's no escaping them anywhere. Good Heavens ! what heaps of them there are everywhere."

"Call yourself an angler !" said Kostyakoff meanwhile, setting his hooks in order, and looking angrily at Alexandr from time to time ; how are you going to catch fish ? You'd better catch mice sitting at home on your sofa ; but come to really catching fish ! How are you going to catch it, now it's slipped out of your hands ; it was almost in your mouth all but cooked. It's a wonder your fish don't slip off your plate."

"Do you get many bites ?" asked the old man.

"Well, you see here," answered Kostyakoff, "here on my six hooks scarcely a wretched gremille has bitten in mockery ; but there meanwhile with his one ordinary line, a pike of ten pounds or so, and then he let it slip. Well, they say the game runs to meet the sportsman. But it's not so ; if it had broken away from me, I should have caught it in the water ; but there's the pike hiding in the stream while we're asleep—and call himself an angler. What sort of angler's that ? are anglers generally like that ? No, a real angler would have fallen on it like a cannon-ball, he would have stopped to look at it. And that an angler ! You'll never catch fish !"

The young girl meanwhile had time to observe that Alexandr was altogether a different kind of person from Kostyakoff. Alexandr's dress was not like Kostyakoff's, nor his figure, nor his age, nor his manners, nor anything. She quickly noticed signs of education in him ; she read thoughtfulness in his face ; even the shade of melancholy did not escape her.

"But why has he run away!" she thought ; "it's a strange thing. I didn't think I was the sort of person to run away from."

She drew herself up haughtily, and dropped her eyelids, then raising them she gazed with no friendly expression at Alexandr. Already she was offended. She drew her father away, and haughtily came near Adouev. The old man again greeted Alexandr ; but the daughter did not vouchsafe him even a glance.

"Let him understand that people aren't paying the least attention to him !" she thought with a sidelong glance to see whether Adouev was looking.

Though Alexandr was not looking at her, he involuntarily assumed a rather more becoming attitude.

"Why ! he isn't even looking !" thought the young girl ; "what impertinence !"

The next day Kostyakoff took Alexandr fishing again, and in that way incurred damnation through his own curse.

For two days nothing disturbed their solitude. Alexandr had at first looked about him, almost with apprehension ; but seeing no one he grew easy again. The second day he pulled up a huge perch. Kostyakoff was half reconciled to him.

"But still it's not the pike !" he said with a sigh ; "you had luck in your hands, and did not know how to profit by it ; that won't happen twice. And again I have nothing ! six hooks set, and nothing !"

"But why don't you ring the bells ?" said a peasant, who had stopped as he passed to look how the fishing progressed ; "perhaps the fish will think it's time to go to church !"

Kostyakoff looked angrily at him.

"Hold your tongue, you ignorant man !" he said, "you boor !"

The peasant walked away.

"Blockhead !" Kostyakoff called after him ; "a brute, yes, a brute he is. He'd have his joke with me, damn him ! a brute, I tell you, a boor !"

It's a serious matter to provoke a sportsman at the moment of failure !

The third day, while they were fishing in silence, their eyes bent fixedly on the water, a noise was heard behind

them. Alexandr turned round and started as if a mosquito had stung him. The old man and the young girl were there.

Adouev, bending sideways towards them, made only the slightest response to the old man's greetings, but he seemed to have been expecting this meeting. As a rule he went fishing in a very slovenly attire ; but this time he had put on a new great-coat, and had tied a blue cravat smartly round his throat ; he had arranged his hair and even seemed to be posing a little as the idyllic angler. After remaining only as long as politeness required, he went away and sat down under the tree !

*“Cela passe toute permission !”* thought Antigone, growing hot with anger.

“I beg your pardon !” said Œdipus to Alexandr ; “we have disturbed you perhaps ?”

“No !” answered Adouev ; “I am tired.”

“Have you had any bites ?” the old man inquired of Kostyakoff.

“What bites can one expect when people shout close by,” replied the latter wrathfully. “Some damned fool came up and went bawling close at hand, and not a bite since then. You live near these parts, I suppose ?” he inquired of Œdipus.

“Over there is our country-house with the balcony,” he replied.

“You pay a big rent, I daresay ?”

“Five hundred roubles a year.”

“It looks a good house, well arranged, and a lot of buildings in the court. Thirty thousand, I daresay, it cost the owner to build.”

“Yes, nearly that.”

“Ah, and is that your daughter ?”

“Yes, she’s my daughter.”

“Ah, a fine young lady ! You are out for a walk ?”

“Yes, we are taking a walk. If one lives in the country, one must take walks.”

“To be sure, to be sure, why not, indeed ? it’s the best time for walking : not at all like last week ; what weather it was, oh, oh ! God preserve us ! It’s done for the wintercorn, I expect.”

“It will get over it, please God.”

"God grant it may!"

"So you have caught nothing so far!"

"I've nothing, but pray look what he has."

He showed the perch.

"I assure you," he went on, "it's singular how lucky he is! It's a pity he doesn't give his mind to it; with his luck I should never have gone away empty-handed. To let such a pike slip!"

He sighed.

Antigone had begun to listen more eagerly, but Kostyakoff said no more.

The visits of the old man and his daughter were repeated more and more frequently. Even Adouev deigned to pay them some attention. He sometimes exchanged a word or two with the old man, and never a word with the daughter. At first she was piqued, then offended, at last depressed by it. Had Adouev talked a little to her, or even paid her ordinary attention—she would have forgotten him; but now it was quite otherwise. The human heart seems to live on contradictions.

Antigone constantly deliberated on some awful plan of vengeance, but later on she gradually gave it up.

One day when the old man and his daughter had drawn near our friends, Alexandr, after a brief interval, had laid his rod on the bushes and gone, according to his habit, to sit in his usual place, and was mechanically gazing now at the father, now at the daughter.

They stood with profile turned to him. In the father he did not discover anything out of the ordinary. A white blouse, nankeen trousers, and a low wide-brimmed hat, trimmed with green plush. But the daughter now! how gracefully she hung on her father's arm! The wind would now and then lift a curl from her face as though on purpose to show Alexandr her lovely profile and white neck, and then raise her silk mantle and give a glimpse of her slender figure, or would playfully stir her dress and reveal a tiny ankle. She was gazing dreamily at the water.

For a long while Alexandr could not take his eyes off her, and he felt a feverish shiver run through him. He turned away from temptation and began to knock off the heads of the flowers with a switch.

"Ah! I know what it means," he thought, "let it have its way and it would pass off! There's love ready-made!—imbecility! My uncle is right. But mere animal instinct shall not carry me away—no, I am not fallen so low as that!"

"Can I fish a little!" the young girl asked Kostyakoff timidly.

"Oh yes, miss; why not?" he replied, giving her Adouev's rod.

"There now, you have a partner in the business!" said her father to Kostyakoff and, leaving his daughter, he began to wander off further along the bank.

"Liza, mind you catch some fish for supper," he added.

The silence lasted a few minutes.

"Why is your partner so cross?" Liza inquired of Kostyakoff in a low voice.

"He's been passed over for the third time in his office, miss."

"What?" she asked, slightly frowning.

✓ "It's the third time they haven't promoted him."

She shook her head.

"No; it can't be!" she thought, "that's not it!"

"Don't you believe me, miss? on my oath! That pike too, you remember, he let slip through it."

"It's not so, not so," she thought now with conviction, "I know why he let the pike go."

"Ah! ah!" she cried suddenly, "look, it's stirring, it's stirring."

She pulled it out and had caught nothing.

"It has got away!" said Kostyakoff, looking at the hook.

✓ "See how it has torn off the worm; it must have been a big pike. But you haven't learnt the art, miss; you didn't let him bite properly."

"Why, is there an art to learn in that?"

"Yes, as in everything," said Alexandr mechanically.

She started and quickly turned round, in her turn letting the rod slip into the water. But Alexandr was now looking in a different direction.

"How is one to arrive at learning it?" she said with a slight tremor in her voice.

"By practising oftener," replied Alexandr.

"Oh, is that it!" she thought, with a flutter of delight; "that means I am to come here oftener. I understand! Very well, I will come, but I shall pay you out, sir misanthrope, for all your impertinence."

This was how the spirit of coquetry interpreted Alexandr's reply to her, but on that day he said nothing more.

"She's fancying, God knows what all, I daresay!" he said to himself; "she is going to put on airs and flirt . . . how imbecile!"

From that day the visits of the old man and the young girl were repeated every day. Sometimes Liza came with her nurse, without the old man. She brought work and books with her and sat down under a tree, with an appearance of complete unconsciousness of Alexandr's existence.

She thought in this way to pique his vanity and, as she expressed it, "to pay him out." She talked aloud to her nurse about her home and household affairs, to show that she did not even see Adouev. And he sometimes actually did not see her, and when he saw her, bowed coolly without a word.

Seeing that this ordinary method availed her nothing, she changed her plan of attack, and on two occasions volunteered a remark herself; sometimes she took a rod from him.

Alexandr, by degrees, became more talkative with her, but was thoroughly on his guard, and did not give vent to any kind of "sincere outburst;" whether through prudence on his part or that his old wounds were still not healed, as he expressed it, he was rather chilly even in conversation with her.

One day the old man had a samovar sent down to the river-bank. Liza poured out tea. Alexandr at once refused any tea, saying that he did not drink it in the evening.

"All this tea-drinking leads up to acquaintance with them—intimacy—no, thank you!" he thought.

"What's the matter with you? why, yesterday you drank four glasses," said Kostyakoff.

"I never drink out of doors," Alexandr added hastily.

"What a mistake!" said Kostyakoff, "most capital tea, prime, cost fifteen roubles, I should say. If you please, a little more, miss, and how good it would be with rum."

Rum, too, was brought.

The old man invited Alexandr to go and see him, but he flatly declined. Liza bit her lip when she heard his refusal. She began to try to discover from him the reason of his unsociability. However artfully she turned the conversation to this topic, Alexandr still more artfully got out of it.

This mystery only excited curiosity and possibly some other emotion in Liza. Her face, hitherto as clear as a summer sky, began to wear an expression of anxiety and thoughtfulness. She often turned a melancholy glance on Alexandr, removed her eyes from him with a sigh, and bent them on the ground, and seemed to be thinking to herself, "You are unhappy, perhaps deceived. Oh, how well I should have known how to make you happy; how I would have cherished you and loved you. I would have guarded you from fate itself—and so on."

This is how most women think, and most of them deceive those who trust in this siren's song. Alexandr apparently noticed nothing. He talked to her as he would have talked to a friend, or to his uncle, without a shade of that tenderness which involuntarily enters into the friendship of a man and a woman, and makes these relations unlike friendship. This is why it is said that friendship between a man and woman is impossible, because what is called friendship between them is either the beginning or the end of love, or else indeed is love itself. But seeing Adouev's attitude to Liza, one might almost believe that such a friendship did exist.

Once only he partly revealed or wanted to reveal his way of thinking to her. He took up from the bench the book she had brought with her and turned over the pages. It was "Childe Harold" in the French translation. Alexandr shook his head, sighed and put the book down without speaking.

"Don't you like Byron? Have you an antipathy to Byron?" she said. "Byron was such a great poet—and you don't like him!"

"I have said nothing and you attack me," he replied.

"Why did you shake your head?"

"Oh, I'm sorry that book has fallen into your hands."

"Who are you sorry for—the book or me?"

Alexandr did not answer.

"Why should I not read Byron?" she asked.

"For two reasons," said Alexandr, after a short pause.

He laid his hand on hers, to emphasise his words perhaps, or perhaps because her little hand was very white and soft, and he began to speak in soft and measured tones, fixing his eyes first on Liza's curls, then on her neck, then on her waist. As he progressed through these stages his voice gradually rose.

"In the first place," he said, "because you are reading Byron in French and consequently the beauty and force of the poet's language is lost for you. Only see how pale and colourless and poor the language is in this! This is the mere ashes of a great poet; his ideas seemed to have been melted into a solution. In the second place, I should not have advised you to read Byron at all, because he will perhaps stir chords in your heart which might else have been for ever silent."

Here he squeezed her hand warmly and expressively, as though he wished to add weight to his words.

"Why should you read Byron?" he went on; "it may be that your life is flowing as smoothly as this stream; you see how small, how tiny it is; it does not reflect the whole sky nor clouds on its surface; there are no rocks or steep places on its banks, it trickles playfully; scarcely does the slightest ripple stir its surface; it reflects only the green of its banks, patches of sky and tiny cloudlets. So no doubt your life might run its course, but you are bringing on yourself storms and agitations for no object; you want to look at life and man through a gloomy medium. Give it up, don't read it! look on everything with a smiling face, don't gaze into the distance, live day by day, don't dwell on the dark sides of life and men, or else——"

"Else what?"

"Nothing!" said Alexandr, as though recollecting himself.

"No, tell me; you have no doubt had an experience of some kind?"

"Where is my rod? Excuse me, it's time I took it."

He seemed disturbed at having spoken out so unguardedly.

"No, one word more," said Liza, "of course a poet must arouse one's interest. Byron was a great poet; why don't you want me to be interested in him? Am I so stupid, so frivolous that I can't understand?"

She was wounded.

"Not that at all : take an interest in what is fitting for your womanly heart; seek what is in harmony with it, or perhaps there may be a fearful discordance between head and heart." At this point he shook his head to suggest that he himself was a victim of this discordance.

"One will show you," he said, "the flower and teach you to enjoy its beauty and its sweet perfume, but another will only present to you the poisonous sap in its calyx, then beauty and fragrance too will be all over for you ? He will make you grieve that the sap is there and you will forget that there is fragrance there too. There is a difference between these two kinds of men and between one's interest in them. Don't seek the poison, don't try to trace to its origin everything that happens to us and about us ; don't seek needless experience ; it is not that that leads to happiness."

She paused. She was listening to him with dreamy attention.

"Speak, speak," she said with childlike submissiveness. "I am ready to listen to you for whole days, to obey you in everything."

"Me ?" said Alexandr coldly, "excuse me, what right have I to dictate to your wishes ? I beg your pardon for having allowed myself to make a remark on them. Read what you like—Childe Harold is a very fine work. Byron is a great poet !"

"No, don't dissemble ! don't speak so. Tell me, what am I to read ?"

With pedantic solemnity he began to propose to her several historical works and travels, but she said she had been bored by those already at school. Then he selected for her Walter Scott, Cowper, a few French and English authors and authoresses, and two or three Russian writers, trying as he did so to show incidentally his literary taste and judgment. There was no similar conversation between them after this one.

Alexandr still meant to make his escape.

"What are women to me ?" he said ; "I cannot love ; I have done with them."

"All right, all right," Kostyakoff observed to this. "You will get married, you will see. I myself at one time only

wanted to amuse myself with the girls and women, but when the time had come I was driven on and shoved somehow into matrimony."

And Alexandr did not make his escape. All his old dreams had begun to stir within him. His heart began to beat faster. Liza's shape, her ankle, her curls hovered before his eyes, and life began to grow a little brighter again. For three days now Kostyakoff had not called for him, but he had himself fetched Kostyakoff to go fishing. "Again! again as of old!" said Alexandr, "but I am firm!" and meanwhile he was hurriedly making his way to the stream.

Every time Liza was awaiting the arrival of her friends with impatience. Every evening she prepared a cup of fragrant tea with rum for Kostyakoff—and perhaps it was partly to this device that Liza was indebted for their not missing a single evening. If they were late, Liza went with her father to meet them. If bad weather kept them at home, next day there was no end to the reproaches heaped on them and on the weather.

Alexandr deliberated and deliberated and decided—Heaven only knows—he did not know himself—with what object, to cut short his walks in time, and he did not go to fish for a whole week. Kostyakoff too did not go. At last they went.

While still a mile from the place where they used to fish, they met Liza with her old nurse. She uttered a cry when she saw them, then suddenly smiled and blushed. Adouev bowed stiffly, Kostyakoff began to chatter away.

"Here we are," he said, "you didn't expect us? he! he! he! I see you didn't expect us and no samovar! It's ages, miss, ages since we've seen each other. Have the fish been biting? I tried to come all the time, but I could not persuade Alexandr Fedoritch; he kept sitting indoors—no, I should say lying indoors."

She looked reproachfully at Adouev.

"What does it mean?" she asked.

"What?"

"You have not been for a whole week?"

"Yes, I believe I haven't been for a whole week?"

"Why?"

"Oh, I didn't feel inclined."

"Not feel inclined!" she said, surprised.

"Yes, what of it?"

She did not speak, but seemed to be thinking; "then is it possible you did not feel inclined to come here?"

"I wanted to send papa into town to you," she said, "only I did not know where you live."

"Into town? to me? what for?"

"That's a nice question!" she said in an offended tone. "What for? To see whether anything had happened to you, whether you were well?"

"But what is it to you?"

"What is it to me? Good Heavens!"

"Why good Heavens?"

"Why! why you know, I have some books of yours." She grew confused. "Not been for a week!" she added.

"Am I absolutely bound to be here every day?"

"Absolutely!"

"Why?"

"Why, why!" She looked mournfully at him and repeated "why, why!"

He looked at her. What was it? tears, agitation, and delight and reproaches? She had grown pale and a little thinner, her eyes were brilliant.

"So that's what it is! already!" thought Alexandr, "I had not expected it so soon!" Then he laughed aloud.

"Why do you ask? Listen," she continued, the flash of some resolution in her eyes. She had apparently braced herself to say something important, but at that instant her father came up to him.

"To-morrow," she said, "to-morrow I must have some words with you; to-day I cannot; my heart is too full. . . . You will come to-morrow? eh? you are listening? you will not forget us? you will not forsake? . . . .

She ran away without waiting for a reply.

Her father looked steadily at her, then at Alexandr, and shook his head. Alexandr stared after her without speaking. He felt something like compunction, and was vexed with himself for having inadvertently brought her into this position; the blood rushed not to his heart but to his head.

"She loves me," thought Alexandr, as he went home. "Good Heavens, what a bore! how awkward it is; now it's

impossible to come here again, and the fish bite splendidly at that place—it's amazing!"

Yet inwardly it seemed he was not ill-content with this; he grew lively and chatted away every instant with Kostyakoff.

Imagination, ever busy, sketched him, as though with some design, a full-length portrait of Liza, with her splendid shoulders, her slim figure, not omitting even her ankle. A strange sensation was kindled in him, again a shiver ran through him, but did not touch his heart, and died away again. He analysed this sensation from its source to its end.

"Animal instinct!" he muttered to himself; "that such an idea could enter my head—ah, bare shoulders, bust, ankle . . . take advantage of her confidence, her innocence . . . deceive . . . and even so deceive her . . . what then? The same weariness and stings of conscience besides very likely, and for what? No, no! I will not let myself go, I will not bring her to that. . . . Oh! I am firm! I feel in me so much purity of heart, so much generosity . . . I will not fall into the mire, and I will not drag her into it."

Liza expected him the whole day in a tremor of happiness; afterwards her heart failed her, she lost courage, and, not knowing why herself, grew sad, and almost ceased to desire Alexandr's coming. When the hour fixed had come, and no Alexandr, her impatience changed to insufferable wretchedness. With the last rays of the setting sun every hope left her; she burst into tears.

The next day she revived again, again she was light-hearted in the morning, but towards evening her heart began to ache and grow heavy with dread and hope. Again they did not come.

The third and the fourth day it was the same. Still hope drew her to the banks; scarcely did a boat appear in the distance, or two human figures on the bank, without her beginning to tremble and grow powerless under the burden of happy expectation. But when she saw they were not in the boat, that the figures were not theirs, she let her head drop exhausted on her breast, and despair settled down on her heart.

In a minute treacherous hope again whispered to her a

soothing explanation of the delay . . . . and again her heart began to beat with expectation. But Alexandr still did not come, as though on purpose.

At last, when half ill with despair in her heart, she was sitting one day at her place under the tree, suddenly she heard a rustling ; she turned round and trembled with the shock of delight ; before her, with his arms folded, stood Alexandr.

She stretched out her hands to him with tears of happiness, and for a long time she could not regain her control of herself. He took her hand and eagerly, even with emotion, looked her in the face.

" You have grown thin ! " he said gently, " you are suffering ? "

She shuddered.

" How long you have stayed away ! " she exclaimed.

" And you expected me ? "

" I ? " she replied quickly. " Oh, if you knew ! " She ended her reply by a warm pressure of his hand.

" And I came to say good-bye to you ! " he said and paused, watching to see how it would affect her.

She gazed with dismay and incredulity at him.

" It's not true, " she said.

" Yes, it's true ! " he replied.

" Listen ! " she said suddenly, looking timidly round on all sides ; " don't go away, for goodness' sake, don't go away ! I will tell you a secret. Papa sees us here from the window ; come to me in the garden, to the summerhouse—it looks out on to the meadow. I will show you."

They went together. Alexandr did not take his eyes off her shoulders and her slender figure, and felt as though shaking with fever.

" What consequence is it, " he thought as he followed her, " if I go ; of course I shall—only look, it's just like visiting their home, the summerhouse . . . . the father invited me ; of course I could go openly and directly . . . . but I am far from temptation, by God, and I will prove it ; indeed I came here on purpose to say I was going away, though I am not going anywhere ! No, Satan, you shall not lead me into temptation ! "

But at this point it seemed as though Kriloff's imp appeared from the hermit's store and whispered to him, " But

why did you come to say this? there was no necessity for it; if you had not come, in a fortnight you would have been forgotten."

But Alexandr considered that he was doing nobly, coming to perform a great act of self-sacrifice, to strive with the tempter face to face. The first trophy of his victory over himself was a kiss snatched from Liza, then he flung his arms round her waist, said that he was not going away, that he had invented that to test her, to find out whether she cared for him. Finally, to complete his victory he promised next day to be at the summerhouse at the same time.

As he went home, he thought over his conduct and felt hot and cold by turns. He was overwhelmed with horror and could not believe it of himself; finally, he resolved not to go to-morrow . . . and was there before the hour fixed.

It was in the month of August. It was already dark. Alexandr had promised to be there at nine, but he arrived at eight, alone, without his fishing tackle. He stole towards the summerhouse like a thief, sometimes looking round apprehensively, sometimes running at full speed. But someone had been before him, and the latter also in haste, ran breathless into the summerhouse and sat down on a sofa in a dark corner.

It seemed they had watched Alexandr. He softly opened the door in violent agitation and walked on tip-toe to the sofa and softly took the hand—of Liza's father. Alexandr shuddered, jumped up, tried to run away, but the old man kept hold of the lappet of his coat and forced him to sit down beside him on the sofa.

"And what did you come after here, my good friend?" he said.

"I—came after fish," muttered Alexandr, hardly able to move his lips. His teeth were chattering. The old man was in no way formidable, but like every thief caught in the act, Alexandr shook as if he were in a fever.

"After fish!" repeated the old man derisively. "Do you know the meaning of the saying to 'catch fish in troubled waters'? I have been keeping watch on you for a long time, and now I have found you out at last; but I have known my Liza from her cradle; she is good and trusting, but as for you, you're a dangerous scoundrel."

Alexandr tried to get up, but the old man kept him by the arm.

"Oh, my friend, don't get angry. You made an affectation of unhappiness, and hypocritically avoided Liza, drew her on, made sure of her, and were meaning to take advantage of it. Is that honourable conduct? What am I to call you?"

"I swear on my honour I did not foresee the consequences," said Alexandr, in a voice of the deepest sincerity; "I did not mean——"

The old man did not speak for a few minutes.

"Well, it may be even so!" he said; "it may be that not in passion but simply in idleness you have led the poor girl astray, without even realising yourself what would come of it; if you succeeded, so much the better—if you didn't, no matter! There are many fellows like you in Petersburg. Do you know how such gentlemen are treated?"

Alexandr sat with downcast eyes. He could not find courage to defend himself.

"At first I thought better of you, but I was mistaken, greatly mistaken! You know what an innocent fellow you affected to be! Thank God, I discovered it in time! Listen; there is no time to lose; the silly girl will come to the tryst directly. I watched you yesterday. There is no need for her to see us together; you go away, and, needless to say, never come here again. She will begin to think you have deceived her and it will be a lesson to her. Only take care we never see anything of you here; find some other place to fish, or else—I'll pack you off without much ceremony. It's lucky for you that Liza can still look me in the face; I have been keeping watch on her all day . . . . else you would not have got off so easily—Good-bye!"

Alexandr wanted to say something, but the old man had opened the door and almost shoved him out.

Alexandr went out in a condition of mind which my reader may imagine, if only he is not ashamed to put himself in his place for a minute. My hero's eyes were even glistening with tears, tears of shame, of anger with himself, and of despair.

"What have I to live for?" he said aloud, "a loathsome, sickening life! But I—I . . . no! if I have not strength of will enough to resist temptation . . . at any

rate I have the courage to cut short this useless, shameful existence."

With swift steps he made his way to the river. It was black, and thin, fantastic, misshapen shadows seemed to be hovering over its waters. The bank where Alexandr stood was shallow.

"One cannot even die here!" he said scornfully, and went to the bridge which was some hundred paces away. Alexandr leaned his elbows on the handrail on the middle of the bridge and continued to gaze into the water. He mentally took leave of life, gave a sigh to his mother, and a blessing to his aunt, and even forgave Nadinka. Tears of self-pity flowed down his cheeks. He covered his face with his hands. There is no knowing what he would have done, when suddenly the bridge began to shake a little under his feet; he looked round; merciful Heavens! he was on the verge of destruction; the grave seemed yawning before him; half the bridge had smashed off and was swimming away . . . . the planks were breaking up—another moment and all would have been over! He rallied all his forces and took a despairing leap . . . . to the safe side. Then he stopped, drew a breath and pressed his hand to his heart.

"Well, you have had a fright, I guess, sir?" a keeper asked him.

"Why, my good man, I all but fell in the middle of the river!" replied Alexandr in a shaking voice.

"God save us! accidents easily happen?" said the keeper yawning; "last year a young bargeman lost his life like that."

Alexandr went home, his hand still pressed to his heart. From time to time he looked round at the river, and at the broken drawbridge, and quickly turned round shuddering and quickened his pace.

Meanwhile Liza had put on her most fascinating attire, and without taking any one, either father or nurse with her, she sat every evening till late at night under the tree.

The dark evenings came; she still waited; but no sight nor sound of her friends.

The autumn had come. The yellow leaves fell off the trees and strewed the banks; the green was fading; the river began to assume a leaden hue; the sky was always

grey ; there was a cold wind with drizzling rain. The river and its banks were deserted ; there was no sound of songs or laughter or ringing voices on the banks ; boats and canoes no longer glided to and fro. Not a single insect hummed in the grass, not a bird chirped in the trees ; only the cawing of rooks depressed the spirit ; and the fish had ceased to bite.

But Liza still waited ; it was absolutely necessary for her to speak to Alexandr, to reveal her secret to him. She still sat on the seat under the tree, wrapped in her jacket. She had grown thin ; her eyes were somewhat sunken ; her face was wrapped up in a handkerchief. It was thus her father found her one day.

"Let us go, you have sat here enough," he said, frowning and shivering with the cold ; "look, your fingers are blue, you are frozen. Liza ! do you hear ? we will go."

"Where ?"

"Home ; we will go back to town to-day."

"What for ?" she asked bewildered.

"What for ? autumn is coming on ; we are the only people left in the country."

"Oh, dear !" she said, "it will be nice here even in the winter ; let us stop."

"So that's your plan ! Enough, enough, let us go."

"Wait a little !" she said in imploring tones, "fine days will come back even now."

"Listen !" replied her father, tapping her on the cheek and pointing to the spot where her friends used to fish ; "they won't come back."

"They won't—come back !" she repeated in mournful, questioning tones, then she dropped her father's hand, and slowly with bent head walked home, from time to time turning to look back.

Adouev and Kostyakoff for a long time past had fished on the side furthest from that place.

## CHAPTER XI

By degrees Alexandr succeeded in forgetting Liza and also the disagreeable scene with her father. He became calm again and even cheerful, and often laughed at Kostyakoff's feeble jokes. He was amused by the man's point of view of life. They even made plans to go away somewhere further, to put up a hut on the river's bank where there were plenty of fish, and to pass the remainder of their days there. Alexandr's soul again grew accustomed to grovelling in the mud of narrow ideas and material existence. But fate did not slumber, and he was not permitted to grovel there for ever.

In the autumn he received a note from his aunt with an urgent request that he would escort her to a concert since his uncle was not quite well. A musician was in Petersburg, of European celebrity.

"What? a concert!" said Alexandr, greatly disturbed, "go to a concert, into the world, into the tinsel show of lies and hypocrisy—no, I will not go."

"It would cost five roubles too, I shouldn't wonder," remarked Kostyakoff who was present.

"The ticket costs fifteen roubles," said Alexandr, "but I would gladly give fifty not to go."

"Fifteen!" cried Kostyakoff, clasping his hands, "what swindlers! to come here to cheat and plunder us! Confound the lazy beggars! Don't go, Alexandr Fedoritch, don't you be taken in! If it were something or other worth having; if you could take it home, set it on the table or eat it; but only to listen and nothing to show for it; pay fifteen roubles! One can get a pony for fifteen roubles!"

"Men will sometimes pay even more to spend an evening pleasantly," observed Alexandr.

"Spend an evening pleasantly! I'll tell you what! let's go to the baths, we shall spend an evening gloriously! Every time I feel bored I go there—and it's capital; you go at six o'clock and you leave at twelve and you warm your body and get scrubbed, and often you make some agreeable acquaintance; some priest, a merchant or an officer will come in; they will begin a conversation about trade, maybe, or the end of the world—and you won't come away! and all

for sixpence each! They don't know where to spend the evening!"

But Alexandr did go. With a sigh he pulled out his evening suit of bygone years, which he had not put on for so long, and drew on a pair of white gloves.

"Gloves at five roubles brings it to twenty!" Kostyakoff calculated up, as he was assisting at Adouev's toilet. "Twenty roubles wasted on one evening! Just for listening; as if that were something so wonderful!"

Adouev had got out of the way of dressing suitably. In the morning he went to the office in his comfortable official dress, in the evening he wore an old surtout or greatcoat. He felt ill at ease in his evening dress. Here it was too narrow, there too short; his neck felt too hot swathed in a silk handkerchief.

His aunt met him cordially, with a sense of gratitude to him for having determined for her sake to lay aside his misanthropy for once, but no word was spoken of his way of life and occupations. Having found a place in the hall for Lizaveta Alexandrovna, Adouev leaned against a column, under the shelter of a kind of broad-shouldered musical maniac and began to be bored. He softly yawned behind his hand, but before he had time to shut his mouth, an outburst of deafening applause announced the appearance of the musician. Alexandr did not even look at him.

They began to play the prelude. In a few minutes the orchestra began to die away. Its last notes mingled indistinctly with another strain, at first sportive, playful, like a reminiscence of the sport of childhood; it seemed as though children's voices, ringing and merry, were heard in it; then it grew more glowing, more manly, and seemed to express the restlessness of youth, and its hardihood and overflow of life and energy. Then it flowed more slowly and softly, and seemed to be translating the outpourings of love, the language of the soul, and, sinking, fell slowly to the whisper of passion and died gradually away into silence. . . .

No one dared to stir. The mass of people sat in breathless stillness. At last a simultaneous "Ah!" of admiration broke from all, and a whisper passed through the concert-hall. The crowd were just beginning to stir, but suddenly the music awoke again, and rushed along in a crescendo torrent, then broke into a thousand leaping cascades,

thwarting and crushing one another in their course. They seemed to be thundering the reproaches of jealousy, and boiling with the frenzy of passion ; the ear had not time to catch them—and suddenly they broke off, as though the instrument had not strength, not voice left. Then a dim broken sound began to escape from under the violinist's bow, then sounds of weeping, of beseechings were heard, and all ceased in a long-drawn sigh of pain. The heart was torn by it ; the music seemed to tell of love betrayed and hopeless pain. Every suffering, every pang of the human soul was heard in it.

Alexandr was trembling. He stood with downcast head and looked through his tears over his neighbour's shoulder. A lean German, bent over his instrument, was standing before the crowd which he swayed so completely. He had finished, and was wiping his brow and hands on his handkerchief. From the hall rose a roar and enthusiastic clapping. And suddenly the musician in his turn bowed before the crowd and began humbly to express his respect and gratitude.

"Even he bows before it," thought Alexandr, looking with awe at the many-headed monster, "even he who stands so high above it !"

The musician took his bow; and all were instantaneously silence. The crowd, which had begun to be restless, settled down again into a single motionless mass. A different strain was sounding, solemn, majestic ; the listener straightened his back as he heard it, raised his head and drew himself up ; it stirred pride in the heart and called up dreams of glory. The orchestra began indistinctly to chime in, like the echo of the crowd in the distance, of renown in the world. . . .

Alexandr stood pale and downcast. The music, as though of design, told him clearly of the past, of all his life, bitter and betrayed.

"Look at that fellow's face !" said some one, pointing towards Alexandr ; "I can't think how he can make such an exhibition of himself ; I have heard Paganini without stirring a muscle."

Alexandr cursed both his aunt's invitation and the musician, and above all destiny for not allowing him to forget.

"What for ? with what object ?" he thought ; "what does

it want from me ? why remind me of the weakness, the uselessness of the past, which cannot be recalled ?"

After escorting his aunt to her door, he was just about to leave her, but she held his hand.

"Do you really mean you won't come in ?" she asked in reproachful tones.

"No, I won't."

"Half an hour, Alexandr, do you understand ; no longer. If you refuse, I must think that you never had the least scrap of affection for me."

She made the request with such feeling, so persuasively, that Alexandr had not the heart to refuse, and with bent head he went in after her. Piotr Ivanitch was alone in his study.

"Have I deserved nothing but neglect from you, Alexandr ?" asked Lizaveta Alexandrovna, making him sit down by the fire.

"You are mistaken ; it is not neglect," he answered.

"What does that mean ? how am I to understand it ? how many times have I written to you and invited you to come to me ; you never came ; at last you even gave up answering my letters."

"It was not neglect."

"What then !"

"Oh !" said Alexandr sighing. "Good-bye, *ma tante*."

"Stop ! what have I done to you ? what's the matter with you, Alexandr ? Why are you like this ? why are you indifferent to everything, why do you go nowhere, and live in company not fit for you ?"

"I don't know, I like this way of living ; to live so suits me."

"Suits you ? Do you find food for your mind and your heart in such a life, in such people ?"

Alexandr nodded.

"You are pretending, Alexandr ; you are very unhappy about something, and you won't speak of it. In old days you found some one to confide your troubles to ; you knew you could always find consolation or at least sympathy ; have you no one now ?"

"No one !"

"You trust in no one ?"

"No one."

"Do you never think of your poor mother—her love for you—her fondness? Has it never struck you that here perhaps is one who loves you, if not as she does, at least as a sister or, still more, as a friend?"

"Good-bye, *ma tante*" he said.

"Good-bye, Alexandr, I will not detain you any more," replied his aunt. There were tears in her eyes.

Alexandr was just taking his hat, then he laid it down and looked at Lizaveta Alexandrovna.

"No, I cannot run away from you; I have not the strength to do it," he said; "what are you doing to me?"

"Be the old Alexandr again, if only for one minute. Tell me, confide in me all."

"Yes, I cannot keep it from you; I will tell you all that is in my heart," he said. "You ask why I hide myself away from the world, why I am indifferent to everything, why I don't visit even you? . . . what is the reason? You must understand that for a long time past life has been hateful to me, and I have chosen for myself the kind of existence in which it is least perceptibly so. I want nothing, I seek nothing except peace, the slumber of the soul. I have thoroughly seen through all the emptiness and all the nothingness of life, and I despise it profoundly. The activity and bustle, the anxieties and sensations, I am sick of it all. I don't want to seek and try for anything: I have no aims, because what you go after, you attain—and then you see it was all a dream. All pleasures are less for me; I have grown indifferent to them. In the polite world, in society, I feel more intensely the evils of life, but alone at home, away from the herd, I vegetate; wha.ever chance befalls me in that slumber I observe neither mankind nor myself. I do nothing, and see nothing of my own or other's actions and am at ease, and all is indifferent to me—happiness I cannot have, but I am not a prey to unhappiness."

"It's awful, Alexandr," said his aunt; "such indifference to everything at your age."

He made a gesture of despair.

"But there are tears in your eyes; you are still just the same; don't disguise it, don't check your feelings, give them vent."

"What for? I shall be none the better for it. I shall only suffer more acutely. This evening has lowered me in my own eyes. I saw clearly that I have no right to blame

any one for my misery. I have myself been the ruin of my life. I dreamed of glory, goodness knows why, and neglected my work ; I made a failure of my humble occupation, and now I cannot make up for the past ; it's too late ! I avoided the herd, I despised it ; but that German, for all his grand deep soul and poetic nature, does not renounce the world or avoid the herd ; he is proud of its applause. He understands that he is a scarcely perceptible link in the endless chain of humanity ; he too knows all I do ; suffering is not strange to him. You heard how he put the whole of life into his music, its bliss and its pains, the delight and the torture of the soul. He understands it. How petty, how worthless in my own eyes I suddenly become to-day, I with my misery, my sufferings ! . . . . He awakened in me the bitter consciousness that I am proud and feeble. Ah ! why did you invite me ? Good-bye ; let me go."

"Then am I to blame, Alexandr ? Could I awaken any bitter consciousness—I ?"

"Yes, that's what's so terrible ! Your pure angel-face, *ma tante*, your gentle words and kind hand . . . . all agitates and touches me. I long to weep, I long to live again, I yearn ;—and what's the use ?"

"Why ask what's the use ? Stay with us always, and if you consider me only partly worthy of your affection, perhaps you will find consolation in some other ; I am not the only one . . . . you will be appreciated. You will marry . . . . will love . . . ." she said feebly.

"I marry ! what an idea ? Can you imagine I would entrust my happiness to a woman, even if I felt any love for her, which also is impossible ? Or do you imagine I could undertake to make a woman happy ? No, I know we should be deceiving one another and both be deceiving ourselves. My uncle, Piotr Ivanitch, and experience have taught me."

"Piotr Ivanitch ! ah, he has much to answer for !" said Lizaveta Alexandrovna with a sigh ; "but you would have done well not to listen to him . . . . and you would have been happy in marriage."

"Yes, in the country, I daresay ; but now . . . . No, *ma tante*, marriage is not for me. I cannot disguise it from myself now, when I cease to care for any one, and be happy ; and I could not even help seeing when my wife was disguising her feelings ; we should both have to play a

part, just as, for instance, you and my uncle play your parts."

"We?" said Lizaveta Alexandrovna in bewilderment and dismay.

"Yes, you! Tell me, are you as happy as you once dreamed of being?"

"Not as I dreamed of being, but happy in a different way from my dreams, more rationally, possibly even more so—isn't it all the same?" replied Lizaveta Alexandrovna in confusion: "and you too—"

"More rationally! Ah, *ma tante*, you would never have said that: one see's my uncle's hand! I know that's happiness according to his system: more rational, I daresay, but happier? Why, everything is happiness with him, he has no unhappiness. Confound him! No! my life is a failure; I am worn out, weary of life."

Both were silent. Alexandr glanced towards his hat, his aunt was trying to find some way to detain him longer.

"But your talent!" she said, suddenly reviving.

"Oh, *ma tante*, you want to make fun of us! You have forgotten the proverb, 'Let sleeping dogs lie.' I have no talent, absolutely none. I have feeling, I had a fertile brain; I took my dreams for genius and wrote. Not long ago I came upon one of the old scribbles I used to perpetrate, and I read it though it was ridiculous even to me. My uncle was right in making me burn all there was. Ah, if I could but recall the past, I would make a very different use of it!"

"Don't be so utterly pessimistic!" she said; "every one of us has to bear some heavy cross."

"Who has got a cross?" asked Piotr Ivanitch, entering the room, "How do you do? May I congratulate you, Alexandr! Is it you?"

Piotr Ivanitch was bent and moved his legs with difficulty.

"Yes, but not the kind of cross you imagine," said Lizaveta Alexandrovna; "I am speaking of the crosses Alexandr has to put up with."

"What has he to put up with now?" asked Piotr Ivanitch, lowering himself with the greatest precaution into an arm-chair. "Ugh! what pain! what a visitation it is!"

Lizaveta Alexandrovna helped him to sit down, laid a cushion behind his back, and put a foot-stool under his feet.

"What's wrong with you, uncle?" asked Alexandr.

"You see it's a heavy cross I have to bear! Ugh; my back! A cross, yes, it is a cross; I have brought it on myself though! Ah, my God!"

"You will sit so much; you know the climate here," said Lizaveta Alexandrovna. "The doctor told you to take more exercise, but no; in the morning he is writing, in the evening playing cards."

"What, am I to go gaping about the streets wasting my time?"

"That's why you are punished."

"There's no escaping this trouble here if you want to attend to your work. Who is there who doesn't suffer with his back? It's almost a distinct mark of a business man; ah, one can't straighten one's spine! Well, what are you doing, Alexandr."

"Just the same as ever."

"Ah, well, then your back won't ache. It's really astonishing!"

"What are you astonished at; are not you yourself partly to blame for his having become—" said Lizaveta Alexandrovna.

"I? well, I like that! I taught him to do nothing!"

"Certainly, uncle, there is nothing for you to be astonished at," said Alexandr. "You were partly to blame because you understood my nature from the first, and in spite of that you tried to build it up afresh; as a man of experience you ought to have seen that it was impossible—you started a conflict in me between two opposing views of life and could not reconcile them; what has come of it? Everything in me has been reduced to a state of doubt, a kind of chaos!"

"Ugh! my back!" groaned Piotr Ivanitch. "Chaos!—why, I tried to create something out of chaos!"

"Yes, and what did you create? You showed me life in all its most hideous nakedness, and at an age when I ought only to have understood its bright side. And by way of guiding my heart in its attachments you taught me not to feel, but to examine, to analyse, to be on my guard with men. I analysed them—and ceased to love hem!"

"How could I know? You see you're such a headlong

fellow ; I thought that that would teach you to make more allowance for them. I know them, but I don't hate them."

"What, then, do you love your fellow-men ?" asked Lizaveta Alexandrovna.

"I get on with them."

"Get on with them !" she repeated monotonously.

"And he would get on with them," said Piotr Ivanitch, "but he had been already too much spoilt in the country by his aunt and yellow flowers ; that's why he found it so difficult to grow out of it."

"Then I believed in myself," Alexandr began again ; "you showed me I was worse than others, and I fell to hating myself. Finally, with one blow, without warning or compassion, you tore away my fairest dream ; I thought I had a spark of poetic genius ; you taught me the bitter lesson that I was not fit to devote myself to literature ; you tore that fancy out of my heart at the cost of anguish and offered me instead a task which was repulsive to me. Had it not been for you, I should have been writing."

"Yes, and have become known to the public as a writer without talent," put in Piotr Ivanitch.

"What have I to do with the public ? I should have taken trouble on my own account, I should have ascribed any failures to spite, envy, ill-will, and by degrees I should have grown used to the idea that it was useless to write, and should have taken to something else of myself. How can you be surprised that, when I had found out everything, I lost heart ?"

"Well, what do you say ?" asked Lizaveta Alexandrovna.

"I don't want to say anything ; what answer is one to make to such absurdity ? Am I to blame that when you came here you imagined that everything here was yellow flowers, and love and friendship, that people did nothing but write poetry some of them while the others listened to it, or sometimes just for a change took to prose? . . . . I tried to make you see that man in general, everywhere, but especially here, has to work, and to work hard too, even to the point of getting backache. Any other man in your place would be blessing his stars. You have not felt want nor sickness nor any real sorrow. What, haven't you loved, will you say ? Haven't you had enough of it ?

twice you have been in love. In time you will marry; a career is before you; only apply yourself; and with it a fortune. Do everything like every one else, and destiny will not pass you over; you will have your share. It's ridiculous to regard oneself as some one grand and exceptional when one has not been created so! Come, what have you to complain of?"

"I don't blame you, uncle, quite the contrary. I can appreciate your intentions, and thank you from my heart for them. What can one do since they failed? Don't blame me either. We did not understand each other, that's where our trouble arose! What suits and is pleasant to you, and to some others perhaps, is disagreeable to me."

"Pleasant to me and some others, perhaps." . . . it's not at all as you say, my dear fellow! do you suppose that I'm the only person who thinks and acts as I taught you to think and act? Look round you; consider the mass of men, the herd as you call it, not as they live in the country—it takes a long while for anything to reach them—but the mass of civilised, thinking, acting men of to-day; what do they want, what are they striving after, what is their view? and you will see it's precisely as I taught you. The demands I made of you did not originate with me."

"With whom then?" asked Lizaveta Alexandrovna.

"With the age."

"And must one absolutely fall in with every idea of one's age?" she demanded. "Are they all so right, all so true?"

"All are right!" replied Piotr Ivanitch.

"What! is it true that one must go more by reason than by feeling? That one must not yield to the heart, but must restrain all demonstrations of emotion, and not give way to spontaneous impulses, not believe in them?"

"Yes," said Piotr Ivanitch.

"That one must always act on a system, trust very little in people, reckon everything as uncertain, and live only for oneself?"

"Yes."

"And is it right that love is not the chief thing in life, that one must care more for one's work than for one's dearest ones, that one must not count on any one's devotion, but must believe that love will end in coldness, estrangement,

or habit? that friendship is all a matter of habit? Is all that true?"

"It was always true," said Piotr Ivanitch, "only in former days men would not believe it, but now it has become commonplace truism."

"And is it right that one should consider, and calculate and deliberate over everything and not let oneself forget, and dream and be lured on by a sham, even though one might be happy so?"

"It's right because it's rational," said Piotr Ivanitch.

"And is it true that one ought to be guided by prudence even with those nearest your heart—with your wife, for example?"

"I never have had such a pain in my back—ah?" said Piotr Ivanitch, shrinking in his chair.

"Oh, your back! It's a glorious age indeed!"

"Yes, a very glorious age, my dear; nothing is done like that by caprice; in everything there is prudence, reason, experience, gradual progress, and consequently success; everything is struggling towards improvement and progress."

"There may be truth in your words, uncle," said Alexandr, "but it's no comfort to me. I comprehend everything after your theory. I look at things with your eyes; I am a disciple of your school; but meantime life is a weariness to me—grievous, insupportable. Why is that?"

"Oh, because you are not suited to the new order of things. For all the mistakes you charged me with just now," said Piotr Ivanitch, after an instant's thought, "I have one great justification; do you remember when you first arrived here, after five minutes' talk with you, I advised you to go back? You would not listen to me. Why do you attack me now, then? I told you beforehand that you were not fitted for the existing order of things, and you trusted to my guidance, asked for my advice, and talked in grand style of contemporary triumphs of science, of the struggles of humanity, of the practical bent of the age—well, there you are! It wasn't possible for me to be looking after you like a nurse from morning till night; why should I? I couldn't be your sponsor, or even put a handkerchief over your mouth at night to keep the flies off. I told you the fact because you ask for it; and what has come of it is nothing to do with me. You are not a baby, nor a fool, you can

reason for yourself. Then, instead of doing your work, you're first groaning over some girl's fickleness, then weeping over a separation from a friend, first wretched over the emptiness of your heart, then over its fulness ; what sort of life is that ? Why, it's misery ! Look at the young men of to-day ; they are young men worth having ; they all seem boiling over with intelligent activity and energy. How skilfully and easily they steer their way through all the nonsense, which—in your old jargon—is called 'passionate emotion,' 'spiritual agonies,' and devil knows what ! "

"How easily you talk !" said Lizaveta Alexandrovna ; "have you no pity for Alexandr?"

"No. If he had a pain in his back, I should pity him ; that not an idea, nor a dream, nor romantic, but a real sorrow . . . Ugh !"

"Tell me, at least, uncle, what I had better do now ? How with your good sense do you solve that problem ?"

"What you should do ? why, go back to the country."

"To the country!" repeated Lizaveta Alexandrovna ; "are you mad, Piotr Ivanitch ? What can he do there ?"

"To the country !" repeated Alexandr, and both looked at Piotr Ivanitch.

"Yes, to the country ; there you would be with your mother and be a comfort to her. You are seeking a peaceful life now ; there is everything to agitate you here ; and what place could be more peaceful than there by the lake, with your aunt. Upon my word, I would go ! And who knows ? perhaps you may . . . Ugh !"

He clutched at his spine.

In a fortnight Alexandr had sent in his resignation and had come to take leave of his uncle and aunt. Alexandr and his aunt were mournful and silent. Tears were shining in Lizaveta Alexandrovna's eyes. Piotr Ivanitch was the only one who talked.

"Neither career nor fortune !" he said, shaking his head ; "was it worth while coming ? you are a disgrace to the name of Adouev !"

"That's enough, Piotr Ivanitch," said Lizaveta Alexandrovna, "we are sick of hearing of a career."

"Well, my dear, to have done nothing in seven years !"

"Good-bye, uncle," said Alexandr. "Thank you for all, for all."

"No, for nothing. Good-bye, Alexandr? Don't you want any money for the journey?"

"No, thank you, I have some."

"What does it mean! he never will take any; it really irritates me at last. Well, good-bye, good-bye."

"Aren't you sorry to part with him?" murmured Lizaveta Alexandrovna.

"Hm!" muttered Piotr Ivanitch, "I have grown used to him. Remember, Alexandr, that you have an uncle and a friend—do you hear? and if you need a post, or something to do, or vile dross, come straight to me; you will always find them all."

"And if you want sympathy," said Lizaveta Alexandrovna, "comfort in trouble, warm trusting affection——"

"And sincere outpourings," added Piotr Ivanitch.

"Then remember," Lizaveta Alexandrovna went on, "that you have an aunt and a friend."

"Come, my dear, that he will not need in the country; they are all there: flowers, and love, and outpourings, and even an aunt."

Alexandr was much affected; he could not say a word. At parting from his uncle he was offering to embrace him, but not quite so confidently as seven years before. Piotr Ivanitch did not embrace him, but only took him by both hands and shook them more heartily than seven years ago. Lizaveta Alexandrovna was shedding tears.

"Ah! there's a burden off me, thank God!" said Piotr Ivanitch, when Alexandr had gone; "I feel as if my back felt easier!"

"What did he do to you?" his wife articulated through her tears.

"Why, it was simply misery; worse than the factory hands. If they play the fool, you can give them the whip; but what was one to do with him?"

His aunt wept the whole day, and when Piotr Ivanitch asked for his dinner, he was told that nothing had been prepared, that the mistress had shut herself up in her room and given the cook no directions.

"And all Alexandr!" said Piotr Ivanitch; "what a worry he is!"

He walked up and down and then went off to dine at the English Club.

## CHAPTER XII

IT was a lovely morning. The lake the reader knows already in the village of Grahæ was just stirred by a faint ripple. The eyes involuntarily winked in the dazzling brilliance of the sunshine which flashed in sparkles of diamond and emerald on the water. Weeping birch-trees bathed their branches in the lake, and in parts of its banks were growing rushes, among which were nestling great yellow flowers reposing on broad floating leaves. Light clouds sometimes passed before the sun ; suddenly it seemed to have turned its back on Grahæ ; then the lake and the forest and the village—all were instantly in shadow ; there was a patch of sunshine only in the distance. The cloud passed—the lake was sparkling again, and the cornfields seemed covered with gold.

Anna Pavlovna had been sitting since five o'clock in the balcony. What had brought her out : the sunrise, the fresh breeze, or the lark's song ? No, she never took her eyes off the road which passed through the forest. Agrafena came up to ask for the keys. Anna Pavlovna did not glance at her, and not taking her eyes from the road gave her the keys without even asking her what for. The cook appeared ; without a glance at him either, she gave him a mulitude of directions. Once more the table was to be spread with a banquet.

Anna Pavlovna was left again alone. Suddenly her eyes brightened ; every energy of her soul and body were strained to look ; something dark appeared upon the road. Some one was coming, but slowly, deliberately. Ah ! it was a waggon coming down from the mountain. Anna Parlovna frowned.

"Some evil spirit sent him !" she said ; "they might go round, all rush up here."

She sank back again disappointed into her easy-chair, and again with trembling expectation bent her gaze upon the forest, without noticing anything around her. But there was something to notice around her ; the scene began to change significantly. The air, hot with the burning sun of midday, grew heavy and stifling. Then the sun was hidden. It grew dark. And the forest, and the distant

villages, and the grass all began to assume a uniform and threatening hue.

Anna Pavlovna revived and looked up. Good Heavens ! From the west was creeping, like a living monster, a shapeless blur of blackness, with a copper glow upon its edges, and as quickly swooping down upon the village and the forest, stretching like two huge wings on both sides. Everything in nature seemed in dismay. The cows hung their heads ; the horses lashed their tails and snorted with distended nostrils, shaking their manes : the dust under their hoofs did not fly up, but was parted like sand under the wheels. The clouds grew heavy with storm. Soon there was the slow roll of thunder in the distance.

Everything was hushed, as though expecting something unprecedented. What had become of the birds that had been fluttering and singing so merrily in the sunshine ? Where were the insects who had been buzzing in the grass ? All were hidden and voiceless, and inanimate objects seemed to share the foreboding of evil. The trees ceased rustling, and, intertwining their twigs together, they drew themselves up ; only sometimes they bowed their tops down as though warning one another in a whisper of approaching danger. The thunderclouds had overspread the horizon and formed a kind of impenetrable leaden vault overhead. In the village every one was trying to reach home in time. There was an instant of universal solemn silence. Then, like a forerunner from the forest, came a fresh breeze blowing cool in the wayfarer's face ; it rustled in the leaves, slammed the door of a hut as it passed, and ruffling up the dust of the street sank away in the bushes. After it rushed a whirling blast slowly raising a cloud of dust on the road ; then it burst into the village, tore some rotten boards from the fence, carried off a thatch roof, and fluttered the petticoats of a peasant woman who was fetching water, and drove the cocks and hens along the street ruffling their feathers.

The squall rushed by. Again a hush. Everything was uneasy and seeking shelter ; only a silly sheep saw nothing coming ; he went on indifferently chewing cud, standing in the middle of the street gazing in one direction and not comprehending the general agitation ; and a straw from the thatch whirling along the road was doing its utmost to keep up with the rushing wind.

Two or three great drops of rain fell, and suddenly came a flash of lightning. An old man got up from the boundary mound of earth and hurriedly called some little grandchildren into the hut ; an old woman crossing herself hastily shut a window.

The peals of thunder overpowering every sound of humanity rolled in triumphant sovereignty in the heavens. A horse broke away from its cord in terror, and dashed into the meadow ; a peasant tried in vain to catch it. And the rain at first fell in scattered drops, then pelted faster and faster and lashed more and more violently on the roofs and windows. A small white hand was thrust out on to the balcony for some flowers, the subjects of the tenderest solicitude.

At the first outbreak of the storm Anna Pavlovna crossed herself and left the balcony.

"No, it's clearly useless now to expect him to-day," she said with a sigh, "he will put up somewhere to avoid the storm, and perhaps for the night."

Suddenly there was a sound of wheels only not from the forest but from the other direction. Someone had come into the court. Madame Adouev's heart stood still.

"What is that?" she thought, "could he have planned to arrive unexpectedly? But no, there is no road that way."

She did not know what to think ; but soon everything was explained. A minute later Anton Ivanitch came in. His hair was somewhat grizzled, he himself had grown stouter ; his cheeks were fat from indolence and good-living. He wore the same surtout, the same loose pantaloons.

"I've been expecting and expecting you, Anton Ivanitch," began Anna Pavlovna. "I thought you were not coming. I had begun to despair of you."

"It's very wrong of you to think such a thing ! with any one else, ma'am, I daresay ! You can't decoy me to see every one, but with you it's another thing ! I was delayed not through my own fault ; I have just driven here with only one horse."

"How was that ?" asked Anna Pavlovna absently, as she moved towards the window.

"Because, ma'am, at the christening at Pavl Savitch's my little piebald fell lame ; some evil spirit induced the

coachman to lay an old door from the barn over the old ditch ; they're poor folk, you see ! They hadn't any new planks ! And on the door there was some hook or something sticking out ; so the horse stumbled and fell over the side, and I was within an ace of having my neck broken—such a shock ! So from that time he's gone lame. They are such stingy creatures, to be sure. You wouldn't believe, ma'am, what their house is like ; it would be better to keep people in some almshouse. And yet every winter at Moscow they will waste their thousand roubles."

Anna Pavlovna listened absent-mindedly to him, and gave a slight shake of the head as he concluded.

" You know I have received a letter from Sashenka, Anton Ivanitch !" she interposed, " he writes he will be here about the 20th ; so I am hardly knowing what I am doing for joy."

" I have heard of it, ma'am ; Proshka told me, but I didn't understand what he was saying at first ; I imagined he had arrived already ; threw it me into a perspiration with joy ! "

" God bless you, Anton Ivanitch, for loving us so."

" Could any one love you more ? Why, I have dandled Alexandr Fedoritch in my arms ; he is just like one of my own kin."

" Thank you, Anton Ivanitch ; God reward you for it ! And the last two nights I hardly slept, and did not let the servants sleep either ; the idea of his arriving, and all of us asleep—that would be a pretty thing ! Yesterday and the day before I walked as far as the forest, and I should have gone to-day, but the burden of old age is too much for me. I have been worn out by a sleepless night. Sit down, Anton Ivanitch. Why you've got quite wet ; won't you like a little breakfast and something to drink ? Dinner 'll very likely be late ; we shall be waiting for the arrival of our dear one."

" Well, then, just a snack ! though I must own I have had some breakfast already."

" Where did you have time for that ? "

" I stopped half way at Maria Karpovna's. I was passing that way, you know, and stopped, more for the mare than for myself ; I gave her a little breathing space. It's no joking matter to trot twelve miles in this heat ! While I

was there I just had a morsel of breakfast. It's as well I didn't listen to them; I would not stop in spite of their trying to keep me; if I had, the storm would have detained me there all day."

"Well, and how is Maria Karpovna getting on?"

"Very well, thank God; she sent her greetings to you."

"I thank you kindly; and her daughter Sophia Vassilievna, and her husband; what news of them?"

"No news, ma'am; the sixth baby will soon be on its way now. They expect it in a fortnight. They asked me to be with them about that time. But there's a poverty in their house it's painful to see. One would fancy they shouldn't think of any more children. But there—there's no end to it!"

"You don't say so!"

"Yes, indeed! in their rooms everything's topsy-turvy; the windows are dropping out; the rain comes through the roof. And they haven't the means to repair things, and cheesecakes and mutton is what they put before you—that's all you'll get! And yet how pressing they are in asking one!"

"And she tried to catch my Sashenka, a draggle-tail like that!"

"Fancy her, ma'am, trying to net such an eagle! I can't contain my impatience to see him; what a handsome fellow, I declare! I've a notion of my own, Anna Pavlovna; how if he's got engaged, proposed to some princess or countess up there, and is coming now to ask your blessing and invite you to the wedding?"

"How you talk, Anton Ivanitch!" said Anna Pavlovna, beside herself with delight.

"I warrant you!"

"Ah! my dear friend, God bless you! There! it had gone right out of my head; I meant to tell you and had forgotten it; I keep thinking and thinking what it was and had it on the tip of my tongue; so you see I was afraid it had gone altogether. But won't you have some breakfast first, or shall I tell you now?"

"It's just the same to me, ma'am, even if you tell me during breakfast time; I won't miss a morsel of it—a word of it, I mean?"

"Well, then," began Anna Pavlovna, when the breakfast

had been brought in and Anton Ivanitch had taken his seat at the table, "I saw——"

"But why don't you take a little yourself?" said Anton Ivanitch.

"Oh, do you suppose I can eat now? I can't swallow a morsel; I haven't even drunk a cup of tea for ever so long. Well, I dreamt in my sleep that I was sitting like this, and facing me Agrafena was standing with the tray. And I thought I said to her, 'Why is your tray empty, pray,' said I, 'Agrafena?' but she did not answer but kept looking at the door. 'My gracious!' I think to myself in my dream, 'why does she keep her eyes fixed on it?' So I began to look. I look, and suddenly Sashenka comes in so mournful looking, and he came up to me and said, quite clearly as if it were not in a dream, 'Good-bye, mamma,' said he; 'I am going that way,' and he pointed to the lake; 'and I shall not come back again,' he said. 'Where are you going, my dearie?' I asked, but my heart seemed breaking. He did not answer, but looked so strangely and pitifully at me. 'But where have you come from, darling?' I thought I asked him again. And he heaved a deep sigh and pointed again to the lake. 'From the abyss,' he murmured, scarcely audibly, 'from the water-spirits.' I shivered all over and woke up. My pillow was all wet with tears; and I could not come to my waking senses; I sat up in bed, and wept streams of tears. Directly I was up, I had a lamp lighted before our Holy Mother of Kazan; may She, who mercifully intercedes for us, protect him from every trouble and sorrow. It's put me in such a state of perplexity; my Goodness, I can't make out what this ought to mean. Something must have happened to him, do you think? Now a storm like this——"

"That's a good thing, ma'am, weeping in one's sleep; it's a good omen!" said Anton, breaking an egg on to his plate. "He will be here to-morrow without fail."

"I was thinking whether we couldn't go after breakfast as far as the forest to meet him; we could drag ourselves up somehow, but see how muddy it has become all at once!"

"No, he will not be here to-day; I have had a forewarning!"

At that instant the sound of a troika bell in the distance

was borne upon the wind and suddenly sank away. Anna Pavlovna held her breath.

"Ah!" she said, relaxing her throat with a sigh, "and I fancied—"

Suddenly it came again.

"My God! is it not a troika?" she said, and rushed on to the balcony.

"No," answered Anton Ivanitch, "it's the colt grazing near with a bell on its neck; I saw it on the road. I scared it just now, or it would have strayed into the rye. Why don't you have it hobbled?"

Suddenly the bell tinkled as though it were just under the balcony and kept ringing louder and louder.

"Ah, my goodness! so it is; here, here he comes. It is he, he!" cried Anna Pavlovna. "Oh, oh! Run, Anton Ivanitch! Where are the servants? Where is Agrafena? No one . . . just as if he were arriving at a strange house; my goodness!"

She was quite beside herself. And the bell was ringing now as if it were in the room.

Anton Ivanitch jumped up from the table. "It's he! it's he!" screamed Anton Ivanitch, "there is Yevsay on the box! Where is the image, the bread and salt? Give them me quick! What am I to carry to him to the steps? How can I without bread and salt? It's such a bad omen. What want of arrangement among you! No one thought of it! But why are you standing still yourself, Anna Pavlovna; why don't you go to meet him? Make haste!"

"I cannot," she answered with difficulty, "my knees are too weak."

And with these words she sank into a chair. Anton Ivanitch snatched from the table a hunch of bread, laid it on a plate, laid a salt-sellar by it, and was rushing to the door.

"Nothing ready!" he muttered angrily.

But he was met in the doorway by three men and two maid-servants rushing in.

"He is coming! he is coming! he is here!" they shrieked, pale and scared as though brigands had just arrived.

Immediately behind them appeared Alexandr himself.

"Sashenka! my dearest one!" cried Anna Pavlovna, and suddenly she stopped and looked in bewilderment at Alexandr.

"But where is Sashenka?" she asked.

"Why, this is me, mamma," he said, kissing her hand.  
"You?"

She took a long look at him.

"You, really you, my darling?" she said, folding him to her. Then suddenly again she looked at him.

"But what's the matter with you? Are you ill?" she asked uneasily, not letting him go out of her arms.

"I am quite well, mamma."

"Quite well! What has happened to you, my dearie? Were you like this when I let you go?"

She pressed him to her heart and began to weep bitterly. She kissed him on the brow, the eyes, the cheeks.

"Where are your curls? how silky they were!" she said, through her tears. "Your eyes used to sparkle like two stars; your cheeks were pink and white; you were just like a clear bright-skinned apple. It seems as if some evil people have bewitched you through envy of your beauty and my happiness! But what was your uncle thinking of? I put you into his hands, as a sensible man! Couldn't he guard my treasure? My dearest!"

The old lady was weeping and overwhelming Alexandr with caresses.

"So tears in a dream are not a good omen!" thought Anton Ivanitch.

"Why are you lamenting over him, ma'am, just as if he were dead?" he whispered; "it's a pity! It's a bad omen."

"How do you do, Alexandr Fedoritch?" he said; "God has permitted me to see you again in this world."

Alexandr gave him his hand without speaking. Anton Ivanitch went out to see whether everything had been taken out of the trap, then began to summon the household to come and salute their master. But all were already crowding into the hall and passages. He arranged them all in order and gave each instructions how he was to make his salutations; which was to kiss the master's hand, which his shoulder, which only the hem of his coat, and what to say while doing so. One lad he rejected altogether, telling him, "you go first and wash your face and wipe your nose."

Yevsay, girt with a leather strap and all covered with dust, was exchanging greetings with the servants; they all surrounded him in a circle. He gave them presents from

Petersburg ; to one a silver ring, to another a birchwood snuffbox. When he saw Agrafena he stood still as though turned to stone, and gazed at her mutely in stupid rapture. She gave him a doubtful side-long look, but suddenly, in spite of herself, she was transformed ; she laughed with delight, then cried a little, but suddenly turned away while her face worked.

"Why don't you speak ?" she said ; "what a dummy ; he never even says how do you do !"

But he could not say a word. With the same stupid smile he went up to her. She hardly let him embrace her.

"An evil spirit has brought him," she said angrily, looking at him stealthily from time to time ; but immense delight was expressed in her eyes and her smile. "Pray, did the Petersburg girls . . . turn your head and the master's ? Just look, what whiskers he has grown !"

He pulled out of his pocket a small card-board box and gave it to her. In it were some bronze earrings. Then he took out of a bag a parcel, in which a large handkerchief was folded up.

She seized it, and quickly, without looking at them, stuffed both the presents in the cupboard.

"Show us your presents, Agrafena Ivanovna," said one of the servants.

"Eh, what are you looking at here ? What do you want to see ? Get along ! Why are you huddling in here ?" she screamed at them.

"See, something more !" said Yevsay, giving her another parcel.

“Show us, show us !” persisted several of them. Agrafena tore open the paper, and out of it scattered a few cards of a used but still almost new pack.

“Well, he’s hit on something !” said Agrafena ; “do you suppose I have nothing to do but play ? what next ! I’ve got a notion. I’ll play with you !”

She put away the cards too. Within an hour Yevsay was again sitting in his old place between the table and the stove.

“Good Lord ! what peace !” he said, now crossing and then stretching his legs, “how different it is here ! But our existence there in Petersburg is simply slavery ! Isn’t there

Cards

a snack of anything, Agrafena Ivanovna? we have had nothing to eat since the last station."

" You've not got out of your old habits then? There! My word, how he falls upon it; it seems they didn't feed you at all there."

Alexandr walked through all the rooms, then through the garden, stopping at every bush and every garden-seat. His mother accompanied him. She sighed as she looked at his pale face, but she did not dare to weep; Anton Ivanitch had scared her out of that. She questioned her son about his way of living, but could not in any way arrive at the reason he had become thin and pale and what had become of his hair. She pressed him to eat and drink, but he, declining everything, said he was tired with the journey and would like to have some sleep.

Anna Pavlovna looked to see whether the bed was well made, scolded the girl rather roughly, forced her to make it again in her presence, and did not go away till Alexandr had lain down to sleep. She went away on tiptoe, and warned the household not to dare to speak and even breathe aloud, and to walk about without shoes. Then she gave orders that Yevsay should be sent to her. With him came also Agrafena. Yevsay bowed down to the ground and kissed her hand.

" What has happened to Sashenka? " she asked in a menacing voice; " why is he like this—pray! "

Yevsay made no answer.

" Why don't you answer? " said Agrafena; " do you hear what the mistress asks you? "

" Why has he grown so thin? " said Anna Pavlovna; " what has happened to his hair? "

" I can't tell, madam! " said Yevsay; " that's the master's business."

" You can't tell! But what have you been thinking about? "

Yevsay did not know what to say, and still did not answer.

" You have found some one here you could trust, madam! " murmured Agrafena, looking with affection at Yevsay. " It's a pity you trusted such a fellow; is he to be trusted? What were you doing there? Tell the mistress! you'll catch it by and by! "

"Me not to be trusted, madam!" said Yevsay, timidly, looking first at his mistress and then at Agrafena. "I was a true and faithful servant, if you will condescend to ask Arhipytch."

"What! Arhipytch?"

"The porter there."

"You see what nonsense he's talking!" observed Agrafena; "why do you listen to him, madam? You should lock him up . . . then he'd soon be able to say!"

"I'm ready to die on the spot—if I didn't always say yes to doing for my master whatever was his respected will!" continued Yevsay; "I will take the holy image from the wall and—"

"You are all good enough in words!" said Anna Pavlovna, "but when it comes to doing anything, then you're nowhere! It seems you took fine care of your master; you let him go till he—my poor darling—lost his health! You looked after him! Here I'll teach you—"

She threatened him.

"Didn't I look after him, madam? In seven years of the master's linen only one shirt has been lost, and except for me they would all have been worn out."

"And where was it lost?" asked Anna Pavlovna angrily.

"At the laundress's. I told Alexandr Fedoritch at the time to deduct for it from her, but he never said anything."

"Only think, the wretch," observed Anna Pavlovna, "to filch fine linen."

"In what way didn't I look after him!" continued Yevsay, "God grant every one to do his duty as I did. Sometimes the master would want to be later in bed, and I run to the baker."

"What kind of loaves did he eat?"

"White bread, good."

"I know it was white; but was it milk-bread?"

"What a post, to be sure!" said Agrafena, "he doesn't know how to utter a word sensibly; and now he's a Petersburger!"

"No, not a bit!" said Yevsay. "Lenten bread."

"Lenten bread! Oh, what a wretch you are, robber, murderer!" said Anna Pavlovna, growing red with anger.

"You did not hesitate to buy Lenten bread for him? You call that looking after him!"

"But the master gave no orders, madam!"

"Gave no orders! He, poor darling, does not care what you put before him, he will eat it just the same. And did it never occur to you? Did you forget that here he always ate milk-bread? Buy Lenten bread! I suppose you took the money somewhere else? I will show you! Well, what more? tell me."

"After he had drunk some tea," Yevsay went on, losing courage, "he would go to his duty, and I to my shoes; I clean them the whole morning, I always clean them over again, sometimes even three times; in the evening the master takes them off, I clean them again. How did I not look after him, madam; why, I never saw on any gentleman such boots. Piotr Ivanitch's were worse polished though he kept three men."

"Why is he like this?" said Anna Pavlovna somewhat appeased.

"It must be from writing, madam."

"Did he write much?"

"Yes; every day."

"What did he write? papers of some sort?"

"Yes, it must have been papers."

"And you, why didn't you try to stop him?"

"I did try to prevent him, madam; 'don't be sitting so,' says I, 'Alexandr Fedoritch; condescend to take a walk; the weather is fine, many gentlemen are out walking. What's the good of writing? you tire yourself a lot; your mamma will be angry.'

"And what did he say?"

"Go away," he says; "you're a fool!"

"And that's just what you are—a fool!" added Agra-fena.

On this Yevsay looked at her, then again continued to gaze at his mistress.

"Well, and didn't his uncle try to prevent him?" asked Anna Pavlovna.

"How should he, madam! he would come, and if he found the master without work, he would fall upon him. 'Why,' he would say, 'are you doing nothing? Here,' he says, 'you're not in the country, you must work,' he says, 'and not

lie on the shelf ! You are always dreaming,' he says ! And he would even give him a scolding."

" How a scolding ? "

" The provinces ! " he would say, and he'd go on and go on . . . . he would scold as I would not have believed my ears."

" Oh the wretch ! " said Anna Pavlovna with a gesture of disgust. " He ought to get children of his own to abuse ! Instead of trying to restrain him, he . . . . Oh Lord my God, merciful Tzar ! " she shrieked, " whom can one trust in these days when one's own kin are worse than savage brutes ? Even a beast cares for its whelps, but here an uncle has been the ruin of his own nephew ! And you, great idiot, could not you have said a word to his uncle to beg him not to rate your master like that, and he would have left off directly. He should have rated at his wife, wretch that she is ! He had some one to abuse with ' work, work ! ' Serve him right if he killed himself with work ! A brute, upon my word what a brute, God forgive me for saying so."

After this followed a pause.

" Is it long since Sashenka has been so thin ? " she inquired at last.

" It's three years now," replied Yevsay, " since Alexandre Fedoritch began to be sadly depressed and took little food ; suddenly he began to grow thin and thinner, he wasted like a candle."

" Why was he depressed ? "

" God knows why, madam. Piotr Ivanitch was pleased to say something to him about this ; I happened to hear it, but it was strange ; I did not understand it."

" But what did he say ? "

Yevsay thought a minute, trying apparently to recollect something while his lips moved.

" He called him something or other, but I have forgotten."

Anna Pavlovna and Agrafena looked at him and awaited his reply with impatience.

" Well ? " said Anna Pavlovna.

Yevsay did not speak.

" Well, gaby, say something," added Agrafena, " the mistress is waiting."

"Dis . . . I think . . . disily — usioned," Yevsay brought out at last.

Anna Pavlovna looked in perplexity at Agrafena, Agrafena at Yevsay, and Yevsay at both of them, and all were silent.

"What?" asked Anna Pavlovna.

"Disill—disillusioned, that was exactly it, I remember!" replied Yevsay in a tone of decision.

"Is it some sort of misfortune? Good Heavens, is it a disease?" said Anna Pavlovna in anxiety.

"Ah, hasn't he been bewitched; doesn't it mean, madam?" put in Agrafena hastily.

Anna Pavlovna grew pale and made a gesture of horror.

"A curse on your tongue!" she said. "Did he go to church?"

Yevsay was somewhat taken aback.

"One could not say, madam, that he went very much," he answered hesitatingly; "one might almost say that he did not go . . . there the gentry go very little to church."

"Ah, that's why it is!" said Anna Pavlovna, crossing herself with a sigh. "It seems my prayers alone were not sufficient in God's eyes. My dream was not a lying one; you have really been torn from the abyss, my darling!"

At this point Anton Ivanitch entered.

"Dinner is getting cold, Anna Pavlovna," he said; "isn't it time to wake Alexandr Fedoritch?"

"No, no, God forbid!" she answered, "he gave orders not to be waked. 'You can dine alone,' he said; 'I have no appetite; I had better sleep a little; sleep will restore me; perhaps I shall be ready for something in the evening.' So this is what you must do, Anton Ivanitch; now don't be vexed with an old woman like me; I will go and light a lamp and pray while Sashenka is asleep; I could not eat; and you dine alone."

"Very good, ma'am, very good, I will do so; you may reckon on me."

"And do me another favour," she continued; "you are our friend, you love us so, call Yevsay to you and question him skilfully why it is Sashenka has grown so melancholy and thin and what has become of his hair? You are a man; it will be more fitting for you . . . whether he has had some trouble there. You know there are such wicked creatures in the world . . . find out everything."

"Very good, ma'am, very good; I will find out, I will

learn the whole secret. Send Yevsay to me, while I am at dinner . . . I will do it all ! ”

“ Good health to you, Yevsay ! ” he said, taking his seat at the table and sticking a napkin over his cravat. “ How do you do ? ”

“ Your servant, sir. What was my life like ? Why, a poor sort of living. See, you have been growing fat here.”

Anton Ivanitch spat.

“ No words of ill omen, my friend ; is it far to misfortune ? ” he observed, and began to eat some cabbage soup.

“ Well, how did you get on there ? ” he asked.

“ Oh ! not over well.”

“ Tell me, were the provisions good ? what did you have to eat ? ”

“ Why, you get a jelly and a cold pie at the shop, and that’s your dinner ! ”

“ At the shop ? but hadn’t you a kitchen of your own ? ”

“ They did not cook at home. Unmarried gentlemen there don’t have cooking in the house.”

“ What are you saying ! ” said Anton Ivanitch, laying down his spoon.

“ Tis so, on my word ; they sent the master’s dinner in too from the cookshop.”

“ What a gypsy’s life ! oh ! he may well get thin ! Come, take a glass ! ”

“ I humbly thank you, sir ! to your health ! ”

A silence followed. Anton Ivanitch was eating.

“ What’s the price of cucumbers there ? ” he asked, laying a cucumber on his plate.

“ Forty pence a dozen.”

“ As much as that ? ”

“ My goodness, yes ; and, shameful to relate, sir, they sometimes bring salted cucumbers from Moscow.”

“ O Lord ! well ! no wonder he’s thin ! ”

“ Where would you see such a cucumber in town ? ” continued Yevsay, pointing to a cucumber, “ you’d not see such a one in your dreams. Such wretched little things—you would not look at them here, but there even gentlemen eat them. It’s in few houses, sir, they bake their own bread.”

Anton Ivanitch shook his head, but said nothing because his mouth was quite full.

“ How do they manage ? ” said he munching.

"It's all at the grocer's ; and what isn't at the grocer's is somewhere at the ham and beef shop, and what is not there is at the confectioner's ; and if it's not at the confectioner's, you must go to the English shop : these French have everything."

A pause.

"Well, and how much is sucking-pig ?" asked Anton Ivanitch, taking on his plate almost half of one.

"I don't know ; we didn't buy any ; rather expensive, two roubles, I should say."

"Oh, oh, oh ! no wonder he's thin ! such prices !"

"Why, look what kvas we have here, but there even the beer is thin ; and the kvas seems to set up a ferment in your stomach all day ! The only thing good is the blacking—ah, there's blacking, you see again ! such a scent it has ; one could almost eat it !"

"What are you saying !"

"Yes, 'pon my soul."

A pause.

"Well, so is that how it is ?" asked Anton Ivanitch munching.

"Yes, just so."

"You fared badly ?"

"Yes, very badly. Alexandr Fedoritch eat the least possible ; he got quite out of the way of eating ; he wouldn't eat a pound of bread for dinner."

"No wonder he's thin," said Anton Ivanitch. "All because it was dear, was it."

"Yes, it was dear, and besides, he hadn't the habit of eating his fill every day. The gentry eat as it were on the sly, once a day, or else when they have time, at five, sometimes at six ; or they snatch a morsel of something and with that they've done. That's the last consideration with them ; they do everything else first and leave eating to the last."

"What a way of living !" said Anton Ivanitch. "No wonder he's thin ! it's a marvel that you didn't die there ! And was it like this all the time ?"

"No ; on holidays when the gentry meet together sometimes, upon my soul, how they do eat ! They go to some German restaurant and they will dine for a hundred roubles I'm told. And they drink—God save us !—worse than a peasant ! Sometimes there would be a party

at Piotr Ivanitch's; they would sit down to table at six o'clock, and get up at four in the morning."

Anton Ivanitch opened his eyes.

"What are you saying!" he said, "and they are eating all the while?"

"They are eating all the while!"

"I should like to see it; it's not our way! What do they eat?"

"Oh, nothing worth seeing, sir! You don't know what you are eating. God knows what the damned foreigners serve the victuals up with; I should not care to put them into my mouth. And their pepper is not like this; they pour into the sauce something out of foreign bottles. Once Piotr Ivanitch's cook entertained me with the dishes from the master's table; I felt sick for three days after. I look, there's an olive in the dish, I thought it was an olive like they are here; I tasted it—look again; and there was a little fish; it was horrid, I spit it out, I took another . . . . and there it was the same; and in all alike . . . . ah, you damned foreigners."

"But did they put them there on purpose?"

"God knows. I asked them; the fellows laugh, and say, yes, they grew so. And what are their dishes? To begin with, they serve soup, with dumplings as it should be and they're scarcely dumplings—as big as thimbles, you put six at once in your mouth, try to chew them,—and already they've gone, melted away. After the soup they serve something sweet at once, then beef, then ice-cream, and then some kind of vegetable, and then a roast, and you could not eat it!"

"So they didn't cook at home with you? Well, no wonder he's thin!" said Anton Ivanitch, getting up from the table.

"I thank thee, my God," he began with a deep sigh, "for Thy heavenly blessings—What am I saying! my tongue is wandering—earthly blessings, and do not let me lack Thy heavenly guidance." You can clear away; the master and mistress will not dine. For supper prepare another sucking-pig, or shouldn't it be a turkey? Alexandr Fedoritch likes turkey: he will be hungry, I dare say. And now bring me some fresh hay in the attic, I will take a nap for the next hour; then wake me for tea. If Alexandr Fedoritch stirs, then wake me up.

When he rose from his nap he went to Anna Pavlovna.

"Well, what is it, Anton Ivanitch?" she said.

"Nothing, ma'am, I humbly thank you for your bread and salt . . . and I have had such a sweet sleep; the hay is so fresh, so fragrant."

"I hope it has done you good, Anton Ivanitch. Well, and what did Yevsay say! You questioned him?"

"I should think so, indeed! I have found it all out; I know all, it's nothing to trouble about. The whole thing comes from their food there having been, it seems, so poor."

"The food?"

"Yes, consider yourself, cucumbers are forty pence the dozen, a sucking-pig is two roubles, and the cooking is all done at the confectioner's—and you can't eat your fill. No wonder he's thin! Don't be uneasy, ma'am, we'll set him on his legs here, we'll cure him. You tell them to prepare a good lot of birchwood infusion. I will give you the receipt; I had it from Prokoff Astafich; give it him morning and evening with rum or holy water, a little glass or two, before dinner. You might give it with holy water, have you some?"

"Yes, yes; you brought me some already."

"Ah, yes, so I did. Prepare rather more sustaining dishes for him. I have already ordered them to roast a sucking-pig or a turkey for supper."

"Thank you, Anton Ivanitch."

"Oh, it's nothing, ma'am. Shall not we order a little chicken, as well, with white sauce?"

"I will order it."

"Why should you? Am I good for nothing? I will see to it. . . . let me."

"See to it, help me, my dear friend."

He went away, and she sank into thought. Her woman's instinct and her mother's heart told her that food was not the principal cause of *Alexandr*'s melancholy. She set to work to question him indirectly by hints, but *Alexandr* did not understand these hints and said nothing. So passed away a fortnight, three weeks. Sucking-pigs, chickens, and turkeys came to Anton Ivanitch in abundance, but *Alexandr* was still melancholy and thin, and his hair had not grown thicker.

Then Anna Pavlovna decided to have a talk with him straight out.

"Listen, my dear one, Sashenka," she said one day, "it's now a month since you've been here, and I have not yet seen you smile once ; you move like a cloud, with downcast looks. Is there something you don't like in your native place ? It seems you were happier in a strange place ; are you longing for it, or what ? My heart is torn when I look at you. What has happened to you ? tell me, what is it you haven't got ? I will grudge you nothing. Has someone done you an injury ? I will revenge that too."

"Don't be uneasy, mamma," said Alexandr, "this is nothing ! I have come to years of discretion, and so I am serious."

"But why are you thin ? and what has become of your hair ? "

"I can't tell you why . . . . one can't govern everything that has happened in seven years . . . . perhaps, indeed, my health is a little disordered."

"Do you feel pain anywhere ? "

✓ "Yes, I have a pain here, and here." He pointed to his head and his heart.

Anna Pavlovna laid her hand on his forehead.

"There is no fever," she said. "Why should this be so ? Is there a throbbing in your head ? "

"No . . . . only . . . ."

"Sashenka ! let us go to Ivan Andréitch ! "

"Who is Ivan Andréitch ? "

"The new doctor ; it's two years since he came here. Such a clever fellow, he's a wonder ! He hardly prescribes any medicines ; he makes himself some tiny little pills . . . . and they do good. Our Foma had a pain in the stomach ; he was groaning three days and nights ; the doctor gave him three little pills, it cured him at once ! You must physic yourself a little, darling ! "

"No, mamma, he will do me no good ; this will go on just the same."

"But why are you dull ? What is this trouble ? "

"Oh . . . ."

"What do you want ? "

"I don't know myself."

"What a strange thing, upon my word !" said Anna Pavlovna. "You say you like your food, you have every comfort and a good position . . . . what more is there ?

and yet you are dull, Sashenka ! " she went on softly, after a pause ; " isn't it time for you . . . . to marry ? "

" What are you thinking of ! No, I shall not marry."

" But I have a girl in my mind—just like a doll, rosy and delicate, as fair as a lily. Her figure is so slender and neat ; she has studied in the town at a boarding-school. She has seventy-five serfs and 25,000 in money, a splendid dowry ; they were in business in Moscow, and an excellent connection. Eh ? Sashenka ? I have already broken the ice with her mother once over coffee, but I only dropped a word in joke."

" I shall not marry," repeated Alexandr.

" How, never ? "

" Never."

" Lord have mercy upon us ! How can that be ? All people are like other people, only you are like nobody else ! And it would have been such a happiness for me ! if God had vouchsafed to me to nurse my grandchildren ! I beg of you, marry her ; you will grow to love her."

" I shall not grow to love, mamma ; I have outgrown love."

" Outgrown love without being married ? Whom have you loved up there ? "

" A girl."

" Why didn't you marry her ? "

" She deceived me."

" How, deceived you ? Why, you weren't married to her yet ? "

Alexandr did not answer.

" You must have nice girls up there, on my word ; to love before marriage ! Deceived you indeed ! the wretch ! With happiness itself falling into her hands, she did not know how to value it, good-for-nothing creature ! If I could get a word with her, I would slap her face ! What was your uncle thinking about ? Who did she find better ? I would have seen to her ! Well, but is she the only one in the world ? you will be in love a second time."

" I have been in love a second time."

" With whom ? "

" A widow."

" Well, why didn't you marry her ? "

" Her, I myself deceived."

Anna Pavlovna looked at Alexandr and did not know what to say.

"Deceived!" she repeated. "I suppose she was some bold creature!" she added. It's really a den of thieves in St. Petersburg—loving before marriage without the sanction of the Church; deceiving. . . . That such things should be done in the world! The end of the world must certainly be at hand! Well, well, tell me, is there not anything you feel a want of? Perhaps the cooking is not to your taste? I will write for a cook from the town."

"No, thank you, everything is all right."

"Perhaps you are dull all alone; I will invite the neighbours."

"No, no. Don't worry yourself, mamma! I am peaceful and all right here; it will pass. I have hardly looked about me yet."

This was all Anna Pavlovna could get out of him.

"No," she thought, "without God's aid we shall not be a step forwarder." She proposed to Alexandr that he should drive with her to Mass at the nearest church, but he slept too late twice, and she could not make up her mind to wake him. At last one evening she pressed him to come to Vespers. "If you like," said Alexandr, and they set off. His mother went into the church and took her stand near the choir, but Alexandr remained at the door.

The sun was already setting and threw slanting rays which played on the golden frames of the images, and lighted up the dark and coarse faces of the sacred figures and dimmed by its brilliance the weak and timid twinkling of the candles. The church was almost empty; the peasants were at work in the fields; only a few old women were huddled together in the corner by the entrance, their heads wrapped up in white kerchiefs. Some were sitting on the stone step of the entrances, their faces leaning on their hands, and now and then they gave vent to loud and grievous sighs, whether over their sins or their domestic cares, God only can tell. Others lay a long while on their faces bowed to the ground in prayer.

A fresh breeze rushed through the iron grating of the window and first lifted the cloth on the altar, then played with the grey hair of the priest or fluttered the leaves of the books and blew out the candles. The priest's and deacon's steps resounded loudly on the stone floor in the empty

church ; their voices echoed feebly under the arches of the roof. High up in the steeple were jackdaws cawing and sparrows chirruping as they fluttered from window to window, and the whir of their wings and the ringing of bells sometimes drowned the sounds of the service.

"So long as a man's vital force is abundant," thought Alexandr, "so long as desires and passions work upon him, he is absorbed in sensation, he avoids the calm, grave, and solemn meditations to which religion leads . . . . when his strength is broken and squandered, his hopes shattered, weighed down by years, he hastens to seek consolation in religion, then——"

Gradually, at the sight of the familiar objects, memories awakened in Alexandr's heart. He passed in thought through his childhood and youth up to his departure for Petersburg ; he remembered how, when he was a child, he used to repeat his prayers to his mother, how she used to tell him about the guardian angel which stands on guard over the heart of man, and is always waging war with the spirits of evil ; how, pointing to the stars, she used to say that these were the eyes of God's angels, who look down upon the world and keep a reckoning of the good and bad actions of men, how the angels weep when the bad seem more than the good in their list, and how they are happy when the good outweigh the bad. Pointing to the blue of the distant horizon she would say that that was Sion. . . . Alexandr sighed, stirred by these memories.

The evening service was over. Alexandr returned home, still more depressed than when he started. Anna Pavlovna did not know what to do. One day he woke up earlier than usual and heard a noise near his pillow. He looked round ; an old woman was standing over him muttering. She at once disappeared as soon as she saw that she was observed. Under his pillow Alexandr found a herb of some sort ; round his neck was hanging an amulet.

"What does this mean ?" asked Alexandr of his mother ; "who was the old woman in my room ?"

Anna Pavlovna was confused.

"It . . . . was Nikitishna ?" she said.

"What ! Nikitishna ?"

"She, you know, my dear . . . . you won't be angry ?"

"But what is it all about ? tell me."

"She, they say, can do a great deal. . . . If she only whispers over water, and breathes on a person asleep, everything will go away."

"The year before last," put in Agrafena, "the widow Sidovicha was haunted at night by a fiery dragon through the chimney."

Anna Pavlovna made a gesture of horror.

"Nikitishna," continued Agrafena, "charmed away the dragon; it left off haunting her."

"Well, and what became of Sidovicha?" inquired Alexandr.

"She was brought to bed of . . . oh, such a wretched black little brat! it died two days afterwards."

Alexandr laughed, perhaps for the first time since his return to the country.

"Where did you pick her up?" he asked.

"Anton Ivanitch brought her," replied Anna Pavlovna.

"You are ready to listen to that fool!"

"Oh, Sashenka, what are you saying? aren't you ashamed? Anton Ivanitch a fool! How can you bring yourself to say such a thing? Anton Ivanitch—he is our friend, our benefactor!"

"Well, then, take the amulet, mamma, and give it to our friend and benefactor; let him hang it round his neck."

From that time he took to locking his door at night.

Two, three months passed away. Gradually the solitude, the peace, the home life, with all the material comforts that went with it, went some way to restoring Alexandr to health.

And here he was better, wiser than any one! Here he was the idol of all for some miles round. And here at every step his soul expanded with peaceful soothing emotions at the aspect of Nature. The prattle of the stream, the whisper of the leaves, the cool shade, at times the very silence of Nature—all begot meditation and kindled emotion. In the meadows, in the garden, at home he was haunted by memories of his childhood and youth. Anna Pavlovna, sitting sometimes near him, seemed to divine his thoughts. She helped him to renew in his memory the trifling details of life so precious to the heart, or told him of something he did not remember at all.

"You see those lime-trees," she said, pointing to the

garden ; "your father planted them. It was not long before you were born. I was sitting, as it happened, on the balcony and looking at him. He was working and working away, and then he would look at me, and the perspiration was streaming on him. 'Ah ! are you there ?' he said. 'That's why I work with so much pleasure,' and he set to again. And that's the little field where you used to play with the children ; so passionate you were ; the least thing not to your liking and you'd scream at the top of your voice. One day Agashka, the one who's Kouzmiy's wife now—his hut is the third from the paddock—gave you a push somehow and your nose was cut and bleeding ; such a thrashing your father gave her, it was all I could do to beg her off."

Alexandr mentally filled out these memories with others. "On that seat, under the tree," he thought, "I used to sit with Sophia, and I was happy then. And there between the two lilac bushes, she gave me the first kiss." And all this was before his eyes. He smiled at these recollections, and used to sit for whole hours on the balcony basking in the sunshine and following it about, listening to the singing of the birds, theplash of the lake and the humming of unseen insects.

Sometimes he moved over to the window which looked out on to the court and the village street. There was a different picture, in the style of Teniers, full of bustling family life. Barbos lay stretched in his kennel out of the heat, his muzzle lying on his paws. Dozens of hens were greeting the morning with emulous clucking ; the cocks were fighting. A herd was driven along the street to the meadow. Sometimes one cow left behind by the herd would low anxiously, standing in the middle of the street and looking round her in all directions. Peasants and women with hoes and scythes over their shoulders go by to their work. Now and then two or three words of their talk are snatched up by the wind and carried up to the window. Further off, a peasant's cart goes rumbling over the bridge and after it slowly crawls a waggon of hay. Unkempt, white-haired children are strolling about the fields lifting up their smocks. Looking at this picture, Alexandr began to understand the poetry of "grey skies, broken hedges, a gate, earth-stained toil and the *trepaka*." His tight trim coat he exchanged for the wide smock of manual labour. And every

incident of this tranquil life, every impression of morning and evening, of meals and of repose, was pervaded by the ever-watchful love of his mother.

She could not be thankful enough when she saw that Alexandr was growing fatter, that the colour had come back to his cheeks, and that a peaceful light was shining in his eyes. "Only his curls do not grow again," she said, "and they were like silk."

Alexandr often took walks about the neighbourhood. One day he met a troop of peasant women and girls, roaming in the forest after mushrooms, so he joined them and spent the whole day with them. On his return home he praised one girl, Masha, for her quickness and smartness, and Masha was chosen in the household to "wait on the master."

He sometimes rode out to look at the field-work and learnt by experience what he had often translated and written about for the journal. "How many lies I told in it," he thought, shaking his head, and he began to go into the subject more deeply and thoroughly.

One day in bad weather he tried to occupy himself with work, sat down to write and was well pleased with the beginning of his attempt. Some book was needed for reference; he wrote for it to Petersburg, and it was sent him. He set to work in earnest. He wrote for more books to be sent. In vain did Anna Pavlovna try to persuade him not to write, "not to cramp his chest," he would not listen to her. She sent Anton Ivanitch to him. Alexandr would not listen to him either, and continued to write. When three or four months had passed, and he not only had not grown thin from writing, but had grown stouter, Anna Pavlovna's mind was set at rest.

So passed a year and a half. All would have been well, but at the end of that period Alexandr began to grow melancholy again. He had no desires of any kind, or at least such as he had were easy to content; they did not go beyond the limits of family life. Nothing agitated him; not a care nor a doubt, but he was depressed! By degrees the narrow round of home-life had grown repulsive to him; his mother's blandishments bored him; and Anton Ivanitch he detested; his work too sickened him, and Nature could not charm him.

He used to sit silently at the window, and now gazed with indifference at his father's lime-trees, and listened with irritation to theplash of the lake. He began to reflect on the cause of this new uneasiness, and discovered that he was homesick—for Petersburg! Now that he was removed to a distance from the past, he began to regret it. His blood was still hot, his heart was still beating, body and soul demanded activity. . . . A failure again! Alas! he almost wept over this discovery. He thought that this depression would pass, that he would grow used to the country, would be habituated to it, but no; the longer he lived there, the more his heart sank and was adrift again on the tossing sea he now knew so well.

He grew reconciled to the past; it became dear to him. His bitterness, his gloomy views, his moroseness and misanthropy were softened in his mind to a love of solitude and meditation. The past presented itself in a glorified light, and even the traitor Nadinka was almost irradiated by it. "And what am I doing here?" he asked himself in exasperation, "why should I wither away. Why should my gifts be wasted? what prevents me from shining there by my efforts? Now I have grown more sensible. In what way is my uncle better than I? Cannot I find out a line for myself? Even though I have not succeeded so far, I attempted what I was not fit for—what then? I have come to my senses now; it's high time I did. But my departure would break my mother's heart! And yet to go is inevitable; I cannot be going to seed here! Up there so-and-so and so-and-so—all have made their way. . . . But my career and fortune? . . . I alone have remained behind . . . but why? what is the reason?" He cast about in anxiety and did not know how to speak to his mother of his plans of going away.

But his mother very soon saved him this trouble: she died.

This was what he finally wrote to his uncle and aunt in Petersburg. To his aunt:

"Before I left Petersburg, *ma tante*, with tears in your eyes you sent me on my way with some precious words which have remained printed on my memory. You said, 'If I should ever want warm affection, sincere sympathy, there would always remain a niche in your heart for me.'

The moment came when I understood all the value of these words. The claims which you so generously gave me on your heart mean for me a guarantee of peace, of tranquillity, consolation, and rest—perhaps of happiness for all my life. Three months ago my mother died ; I will not add another word. You know from her letters what she was for me, what I have lost in her. I am now leaving here for ever. But where, a solitary pilgrim, should I take my way if not to the place where you are ? . . . Tell me only one thing : shall I find in you what I left behind a year and a half ago ? Have you not cast me out of your memory ? Will you consent to the dreary duty of healing with your affection—which has already delivered me more than once from grief—a new and deep wound ? All my hopes I rest on you and on another powerful ally—activity.

“ You wonder, do you not ? It seems strange to you to hear this from me—to read those lines written in a tranquil strain so unnatural to me ? Do not wonder, and don’t be afraid of my return ; you will see, not a raving enthusiast, nor a sentimentalist, nor a disillusioned cynic, nor a provincial, but simply a man such as there are many more in Petersburg, and such as I ought long ago to have become. Reassure my uncle especially on that score. When I look back on my past life, I feel uneasy and ashamed both of others and of myself. But it could not have been otherwise. Now only I have recognised my errors—at thirty ! The painful discipline I went through in Petersburg and meditation in the country have made my course fully clear to me. Here, removed to a respectful distance from my uncle’s lessons and my own experience, I have pondered them in tranquillity more clear-sightedly, and I see what they ought to have led me to long ago ; I see how miserably and irrationally I have turned away from the right aim. I am now calm ; I am not torn and harassed, but I do not plume myself on this. It may be that this calm is even yet the result of egoism ; I feel, however, that soon my insight into life will grow clear enough for me to discover another source of peace—a purer one. At present I cannot still help regretting that I have now reached the boundary where, alas ! youth is over and the time has come for reflection, self-control, and the restraint of every emotion—the time of consciousness.

"Though perhaps my opinion of men and of life has changed, too, a little, much of my hopefulness has vanished, many of my desires have grown weaker ; in a word, my illusions are dissipated ; consequently, it will not be my lot to be mistaken and deceived in many things or many people, and this is very consolatory from one point of view. And I look forward to a brighter future ; the most painful part is past ; my passions I do not dread, for few of them are left ; the most important are over, and I look back on them with thankfulness. I am ashamed to remember that I regarded myself as a victim : I cursed life, and my lot—I cursed it ! What miserable childishness and ingratitude ! How long I was in seeing that sufferings purify the soul, that they make a man tolerable to himself and to others ; they raise him. . . . I acknowledge now that not to have one's shares of sorrows means not to have one's full share in life ; there are many problems in them, the solution of which we shall see, perhaps, not here. I see in these distresses the hand of Providence, which seems to set man an endless task—to strive forward, to reach higher than the aim he proposes to himself through hourly conflict with deceitful hopes, with tormenting obstacles. Yes, I see how indispensable is this conflict, are these emotions to life ; how life without them would not be life, but stagnation, slumber. . . . The conflict over, and life is at an end ; the man was busy, loved ; was happy, suffered ; was distressed, did his work ; and thus he lived !

" You see how I reason ; I have come out of darkness, and I see that all my life up till now has been a kind of laborious preparation for the true way, a difficult apprenticeship to life. Something tells me that the rest of the way will be easier, calmer, plainer. . . . The dark places have grown light ; hard knots have unloosed themselves ; life begins to seem a blessing, not an evil. Soon I shall say again, how fair a thing is life ! But I shall say it, not as a boy praising the pleasure of the moment, but with a full knowledge of its true pleasures and pains. Moreover, death itself is not terrible ; it presents itself not as a fearful but as a glorious experience. And now there is in my soul a sense of unknown peace ; childish annoyances, the sting of wounded vanity, puerile irritability, and comic anger with the world and men, like the anger of a puppy with an elephant—all is

over. I have grown friendly again with those with whom I was so long estranged—my fellow-creatures, who, I may remark in passing, are the same here as in Petersburg, only a little rougher, a little coarser, a little more ridiculous. But I do not lose patience with them even here, and there I shall be far from losing patience. Here is an example of my urbanity for you: a ridiculous creature, a certain Anton Ivanitch, drives over to me to stay with me, to share my sorrow, it seems. To-morrow he will go to a wedding at a neighbour's—to share their joy, and then to some one else—to share the duties of the monthly nurse. But neither sorrow nor joy will hinder him from eating four times a day at every house. I see that it is all the same to him whether some one is dead or born or married, yet it's not repugnant to me to look at him; it does not vex me. I put up with him, I don't repulse him. . . . It's a good sign, isn't it, *ma tante?* What will you say when you read this praise of myself?"

To his uncle:

"Dear and beloved uncle, and your Excellency withal!

"With what delight I learnt that your career had been completed by this dignity! You are actually a Councillor of State—you the director of a chancery office! I am so bold as to remind you of the promise you gave me on my departure. 'When you want office, employment, or money, turn to me,' you said. And now here I am in want of office and employment; money, of course, I want as well. The poor provincial ventures to beg for a place and work. What reception awaits my request? Is it such a reception as once befel a letter from Zayeshaloff begging you to busy yourself about his lawsuit? . . . As to the 'creative genius' of which you had the cruelty to remind me in one of your letters, well . . . isn't it too bad of you to bring up long-forgotten follies, when I myself blush for them? . . . Fie, uncle! for shame, your Excellency! Who has not been young and, on some points, foolish? Who has not had some strange, so-called 'sacred' dream which was never destined to come to anything? My neighbour here on the right fancied himself a hero, a giant, a warrior before the Lord. He wanted to astonish the world by his exploits, and it has all ended in his becoming an ensign on the retired list without ever having seen service; and he is peacefully

digging potatoes and sowing turnips. Another one on my left dreamed of reforming Russia and the whole world after his own fashion, and he, after copying deeds for some time in the Courts of Justice, has retired here, and so far has not even succeeded in reforming his old fence. I thought that I had been endowed with creative talent from on high, and I wanted to reveal to the world new unknown mysteries, not suspecting that there are now no mysteries, and I am not a prophet. We are all ridiculous ; but tell me who, without a blush for himself, will venture to stigmatise as wholly bad these youthful, generous, ardent, though not altogether rational ideals ? Who has not in his time cherished fruitless desires, and pictured himself as the hero of a glorious achievement, a song of triumph, a renowned event ? Whose imagination has not been transported to the heroic times of story ? Who has not wept, feeling himself great and exalted ? If such a man is to be found, let him throw a stone at me. I do not envy him. I blush for my youthful ideals, but I honour them ; they are the guarantee of purity of heart, the sign of a generous spirit inclined to good.

"And was your own youth innocent of these errors ? Remember, ransack your memory. I can see even here how you shake your head with your calm never embarrassed expression, and say, no.

"Let me convict you, for instance, as to love ; you deny it. Do not deny it ; the proof is in my hands. Recollect that I have been able to follow the matter on the scene of action. The background of your love affair is before my eyes—the lake. Yellow flowers still grow by it ; one of them, suitably preserved, I have the honour of forwarding your Excellency enclosed in this by way of a sweet souvenir. But I have a more terrible weapon to parry your attacks upon love in general and mine in special—a document ! . . . . You frown ! and such a document ! Are you pale ? I filched this precious antiquity from my auntie, from her no less antique bosom, and I shall bring it with me as a perpetual testimony against you and a vengeance for me. Tremble, uncle ! Not only so. I know in detail the whole story of your love ; my auntie relates it to me every day over our morning tea, and over supper, with every fact of interest.

"And I am putting all these priceless materials into a

special memoir. I shall not fail to hand it to you in person together with my essays on points of agricultural economy on which I have been busy here for the last year. I for my part consider it a duty to assure my auntie of the constancy of 'your sentiments,' as she says, to her. When I am honoured by receiving a favourable reply to my request from your Excellency, I shall take the liberty of coming to you with propitiatory offerings of dried raspberries and honey, and bearing several letters which my neighbours promise to furnish me with, dealing with their several needs, but not one from Zayeshaloff, who died before the conclusion of his lawsuit."

### EPILOGUE

FOUR years after Alexandr's return to Petersburg, this was the position of the principal personages of this story.

One morning Piotr Ivanitch was walking up and down in his study. It was no longer the robust, stout, upright Piotr Ivanitch of former days, who always wore a uniformly calm expression, and moved with his head haughtily erect and unfaltering gait. Whether from age or the force of circumstances, he seemed to have grown feebler. His movements were not so vigorous, his glance was not so firm and self-confident. There were many silver hairs to be seen in his whiskers and his moustache. It was obvious that he had celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of his life. He walked a little bent. It was specially curious to observe on the face of this passionless and tranquil man—as we have known him hitherto—a more than anxious, a harassed expression, even though it was manifest in a way characteristic of Piotr Ivanitch.

He seemed as though he were in perplexity. He took two steps, and suddenly stood still in the middle of the room, or hurriedly paced twice or thrice from one end of it to the other. It seemed as though he were struck by some unusual idea.

In the chair by the table sat a stout man of medium height, with a decoration on his breast, his coat tightly buttoned up, and his legs crossed. He needed only the gold-headed cane, the classical stick by which the reader has been used to recognise at once the doctor in romances

and novels. Very likely this staff was suitable to a doctor, when, having nothing to do, he could take his walks abroad with it, and sit for whole hours with patients, console them, and unite in his person the several characters of apothecary, practical philosopher, friend of the family, &c. All this is very well where men live in peace and comfort, and are seldom ill, and where a doctor is more a luxury than a necessity. But Piotr Ivanitch's ~~doctor~~ was a Petersburg physician. He did not know what walking meant, though he used to prescribe exercise to his patients. He was a member of some committee, secretary of some other society, a professor, and physician to several public institutions, and invariably took part in every consultation; he had too, an immense practice. He did not even take his glove off his left hand, he would not even have taken off the right hand one if he had not had to feel the pulse; he never unbuttoned his coat and scarcely sat down. The doctor in impatience had already more than once shifted his right leg over his left, and then again his left over his right. It was long ago time for him to be gone, but still Piotr Ivanitch said nothing.

At last :

"What is to be done, doctor?" asked Piotr Ivanitch, suddenly coming to a standstill before him.

"Go to Kissingen," replied the doctor: "it's the one remedy. Your symptoms will recur more frequently."

"Ah, you keep on talking of me!" interposed Piotr Ivanitch. "I am asking you about my wife. I am over fifty, but she is in the very bloom of her age; she ought to live: and if she begins to waste away from me——"

"You talk of wasting away already!" observed the doctor. "I only informed you of the danger for the future; so far there is nothing. . . . I only meant to say that her health, or not her health, that she is not exactly in a normal condition."

"Isn't it all the same? You made your observation superficially, and forgot it; but I have kept watch on her constantly since then, and every day I discern in her new disquieting changes. And for three months now I have known no peace of mind. How it was I didn't see it before I don't understand. My duties and my business rob me of time and health, and now, perhaps, of even my wife!"

Again he fell to pacing up and down the room.

"You questioned her to-day?" he asked, after a pause.

"Yes; but she has noticed nothing wrong in herself. I supposed at first there was a physiological explanation: she has had no children, but it seems it's not so. Perhaps the cause is purely psychological."

"So much the worse!" remarked Piotr Ivanitch.

"But perhaps it's nothing at all. Suspicious symptoms there are absolutely none. It's only . . . you have been living too long in this malarious climate. Go to the South: you will be freshened up, gain some new impressions, and see how things are then. Spend the summer at Kissingen, go through a course of the waters, and the autumn in Italy, and the winter in Paris. I assure you that the catarrh, the irritability, will be all over."

Piotr Ivanitch scarcely listened to him.

"A psychological cause," he said to himself, and shook his head.

"That's to say, do you see why I say a psychological cause?" said the doctor. "Another man, not knowing you, might suspect some anxiety of some kind in it . . . or if not anxiety, some unsatisfied desire . . . some time there is something wanting, some lack . . . I wanted to lead you to the idea."

"Something wanted—desires?" interposed Piotr Ivanitch. "All her desires are satisfied. I know her tastes, her habits. But some lack—how! You see our house, you know how we live."

"A splendid house, a capital house," said the doctor; "a marvellous cook, and what cigars! But why has that friend of yours that lives in London . . . left off sending you sherry? Why is it that this year we do not see——"

"Doctor, have I not been considerate with her?" began Piotr Ivanitch, with a heat not usual to him. "I weighed, I thought, every step I took. . . . No; somewhere there was failure. And at what a time—with all my successes, in such a career! Ah!"

With a gesture of the hand he resumed his pacing.

"Why are you so upset?" said the doctor. "There is distinctly nothing alarming. I repeat to you what I said on the first occasion: that her constitution is not touched;

there are no consumptive symptoms. Anæmia, some loss of strength—that's all.

"A trifle, truly!" said Piotr Ivanitch.

"Her ill-health is negative, not positive," pursued the doctor. "Do you suppose she is an exception? Look at all who are not natives living here. What do they look like? Go away, go away from here. But if it's impossible to go, rouse her. Don't let her sit so much. Humour her; take her about; plenty of exercise for mind and body: both alike are in an unnatural lethargy. Of course, in time it may affect the lungs, or—"

"Good-bye, doctor. I will go to her," said Piotr Ivanitch, and with rapid steps he strode to his wife's room. He stood still in the doorway, gently moved the *portière*, and turned an anxious gaze upon his wife.

What did the doctor observe that was peculiar in her? Every one meeting her for the first time would have seen in her a woman like many others in Petersburg. Pale, it is true, her eyes lacked lustre, her blouse hung in straight folds over her narrow shoulders and flat chest, her movements were slow, almost inert. . . . . But are rosy cheeks, bright eyes, and lively gestures characteristics of our beauties? And as for grace of figure. . . . . Neither Phidias nor Praxitiles could have found here a Venus for their chisel.

No, one must not look for classical beauty in the fair women of the North; they are not statues; they fall into no antique pose, such as the beauty of the Greek women has been immortalised in; nor have they the form which would take such poses; they have not the faultlessly correct lines of the body. . . . . Sensuality does not flow from their eyes in moist brilliance; on their half-opened lips there is not the melting, frankly passionate smile, which burns on the lips of the women of the South. To our women is given a different, higher beauty in compensation. No sculptor could catch the light of thought in the traits of their countenances, the conflict of will with passion, the play of unutterable fluctuations of the soul with innumerable subtle shades of caprice, apparent simplicity, anger and kindness, hidden delights and sufferings. . . . all these like flying sparks thrown off by the soul that is their centre. . . . .

From whatever cause, no one seeing Lizaveta Alexandrovna for the first time would have noticed anything wrong with her. Only one who had known her before, who remembered the freshness of her face, the brilliance of her glance, through which at times one could not see the colour of her eyes—they seemed to swim in rich tremulous waves of light—who remembered her splendid shoulders and shapely bosom, would have looked with pained surprise at her now, and would, if he were not indifferent to her, have been heavy at heart, as now Piotr Ivanitch was, with a sympathetic sorrow which he was afraid to admit to himself.

He went gently into the room and sat down near her.

"What are you doing?" he asked.

"I am looking through my account-book," she answered. "Only think, Piotr Ivanitch; in the course of last month nearly a thousand and a half roubles gone on food; it's beyond everything!"

Without saying a word he took the book from her and laid it on the table.

"Listen to me," he began, "the doctor says that my complaint may get worse here; he advises us to go away to some watering-place abroad. What do you say to it?"

"What do I say? The doctor's opinion in such a matter is of more importance than mine, I imagine. We must go away, if he advises it."

"But you? Would you wish to make such a journey?"

"If you like."

"But perhaps you would rather stay here?"

"Very well, I will stay."

"Which of the two?" asked Piotr Ivanitch with some impatience.

"Make the arrangements for yourself and for me too, as you choose," she replied with despondent indifference; "if you direct me I will go, if not I will stay here."

"You cannot stay here," said Piotr Ivanitch; "the doctor says that your health is suffering somewhat through the climate."

"What did he base that idea on?" said Lizaveta Alexandrovna; "I am well, I feel nothing amiss."

"Continual travelling," said Piotr Ivanitch, "will perhaps be too exhausting for you too; wouldn't you like to stay at Moscow with your aunt while I am abroad?"

"Very well ; I will go to Moscow then."

"Or shall we not go together to the Crimea for the summer?"

"Very well, to the Crimea then."

Piotr Ivanitch did not persist ; he got up from the sofa, and began to pace about as he had done in his study, then he stood still near her.

"You don't care where you go ?" he said.

"No, it's all the same," she said.

"Why is it so ?"

"Say what you like, Piotr Ivanitch," she observed, "we must cut down our expenses ; a thousand five hundred roubles on food alone !"

He took the book from her and threw it under the table.

"Why do you occupy yourself with it so much ?" he inquired ; "do you regret the money ?"

"But what else should I do ? Why, I am your wife ? You yourself taught me . . . . and now you reproach me with occupying myself . . . . I am doing my duty !"

"Listen, Liza !" said Piotr Ivanitch, after a short silence ; "you are trying to transform your nature, to conquer yourself . . . . that's not right. I never required it of you ; you will not make me believe that these wretched things (he pointed to the account-book) could really occupy your mind. Why do you want to force yourself ? I give you complete freedom."

"Good Heavens ! what do I want with freedom," said Lizaveta Alexandrovna, "what am I to do with it ? Hitherto you have disposed of me and yourself so well, so wisely, that I have got out of the way of being independent ; continue to do so for the future ; and I shall have no need of freedom."

Both were silent.

"It is a long while, Liza," Piotr Ivanitch began again, "since I have heard from you any request, any desire of any kind or fancy."

"There is nothing I want," she said.

"Have you not any special . . . . secret wishes ?" he asked sympathetically, looking steadily at her.

She hesitated whether to speak or not.

Piotr Ivanitch noticed it.

"Tell me, for God's sake, tell me!" he went on, "your wishes shall be mine, I will obey them as a law."

"Very well, then," she answered; "if you could do this for me . . . give up our Fridays . . . these entertainments wear me out."

Piotr Ivanitch grew gloomy.

"You live like a prisoner even now," he said, after a pause, "and when your friends cease to meet round you on Fridays, you will be completely in solitude. However, so be it; you wish it . . . it shall be done. What do you want to do?"

"Hand me over your accounts, your books to keep, some business . . . I will work at them . . ." she said, and stretched under the table to pick up the account-book.

To Piotr Ivanitch this seemed like a piece of ill-acted simulation.

"Liza!" he said reproachfully.

The book remained under the table.

"I am wondering whether you would not renew some acquaintances which we have quite dropped? I was meaning to give a ball with that idea, so that you should have some amusement——"

"Oh, no, no!" said Lizaveta Alexandrovna in dismay, "for goodness' sake, no, it's not necessary . . . How is it possible . . . a ball!"

"What is there to alarm you in it? At your age balls do not lose their attractions, you might still dance."

"No, Piotr Ivanitch, I entreat you, don't make plans!" she said earnestly; "to have to think about dress, to get oneself up, receive a crowd, go out . . . Heaven forbid!"

"You seem to wish to spend all your days in a blouse?"

"Yes, if you don't object, I would rather not change it. What is the object of dressing up? it's a mere waste of money and useless trouble without any advantage."

"Do you know what?" said Piotr Ivanitch suddenly, "they say that Rubini is engaged to be here this winter; we shall have a round of Italian Opera; I will take a box for us . . . what do you say to it?"

"She did not speak.

"Liza!"

"It would be useless," she said timidly, "I think that, too, would be exhausting for me . . . I get so tired."

Piotr Ivanitch bowed his head, walked to the hearth and leaning against it, gazed at her with—what shall we call it—distress, no not only distress, but with fear, anxiety and alarm.

"What is the reason, Liza, of this . . ." he was beginning, but he did not finish the sentence; the word indifference he could not form on his tongue.

He gazed long in silence at her. In her lifeless, lustreless eyes, in her face, devoid of all bright play of thought and feeling, in her languid attitude and slow movements, he read the cause of this indifference, about which he feared to inquire; he had guessed the answer already when the doctor had only given him a hint of the danger. He had come to his senses then and began to suspect that while he had fenced his wife in away from any deviation which might have threatened their matrimonial interests, he had not at the same time presented her with any compensations in himself, to make up for the possibly unsanctioned happiness which she might have met outside the pale of marriage—that her home world was nothing more than a prison, thanks to his method, inaccessible to temptation, and unpropitious to any legitimate demonstration of feeling, where she was met at every step by spiked railings and patrols.

The systematic and calculating nature of his behaviour to her had, without his knowledge or intention, amounted to a cold and narrow tyranny, and a tyranny over what? a woman's heart. To make up for this tyranny, he had lavished on her wealth, luxury, all the externals, and as he imagined the conditions of happiness—a fearful mistake; the more fearful, because it was committed not from ignorance, not from his want of understanding of the heart—he knew it—but from negligence, from egoism! He had forgotten that she had not a factory, that a capital dinner and the best wines have almost no significance in the eyes of a woman, and meanwhile he had set her to live this life.

Piotr Ivanitch had a good heart; and even if not from love for his wife, from a feeling of rectitude alone he would have given anything to correct the wrong he had done; but how to correct it? He had passed more than one sleepless night since the time the doctor had warned him of the

dangers in regard to his wife's health, trying to find some way of reconciling her to her real position and restoring her drooping strength. And now, standing by the fire-place, he was still ruminating upon it. The idea came into his head that perhaps the germs of serious disease were already lurking in her, that she was being killed by her colourless and empty life.

Cold drops of perspiration stood on his brow. He was quite at a loss for remedies, feeling that the heart was more wanted than the head to devise them. But where was he to get the heart? Something told him that if he could have thrown himself at her feet, and have folded her in his arms with tenderness, and with the voice of passion have told her that he only lived for her, that the aim of all his labours, his cares, his career, his gains, was—she; that his systematic way of behaving with her had only been inspired by a consuming, persistent, jealous desire to bind her heart to him. . . . . He knew that such words would have the effect of galvanism on a corpse, that she would all at once have blossomed into health and happiness.

But saying and proving are two very different things. To prove this, it would be necessary really to feel passion. And, searching in his soul, Piotr Ivanitch could not find there the least trace of passion. He felt only that his wife was indispensable to him, but like the other indispensable things of life, she was indispensable from habit. Granted that he would be ready to feign feeling, to play the part of a lover, however ridiculous it would be at fifty to begin speaking the language of passion; but will you deceive a woman with passion when there is none? And afterwards, would he have the heroism and ability to sustain this character to the degree which would appease the cravings of the heart? And would not outraged pride be really fatal to her when she found out that what a few years ago would have been a magic potion for her was offered her now as a medicine? No, after his fashion he had exactly weighed and considered this late step, and he could not decide on it. He fancied that he would do perhaps the same thing, only differently, in the only way now possible. For three months an idea had been working within him which would have in former days seemed an absurdity to him, but now—it was a very different matter!

He kept it for a resource in extremity ; the extremity had come, and he decided to carry out the plan.

" If this is no use," he thought, " then there is no help for it, come what must ! "

Piotr Ivanitch walked with resolute steps up to his wife and took her hand.

" You know, Liza," he said, " what a part I play in official life ; I am looked on as the most capable secretary in the ministry. This year I shall offer myself for the privy council, and I shall certainly receive a post. Do not imagine that my career is ended there ; I may go higher still . . . . and arrive at—"

She looked at him puzzled, waiting to know what this was leading up to.

" I never doubted your abilities," she said. " I am quite convinced that you will not stop half way, but will reach the highest—"

" No, I shall not ; in a few days I shall send in my resignation."

" Resignation? " she said in astonishment, starting up.

" Yes."

" What for ? "

" I have more to tell you ; you know that I have made an arrangement with my partners, and the factory belongs to me alone. It brings me in forty thousand nett profit without any trouble. It goes like a machine wound up."

" I know ; what of it ? " inquired Lizaveta Alexandrovna.

" I am giving it up."

" What are you talking about, Piotr Ivanitch ? What is the matter with you ? " said Lizaveta Alexandrovna with increasing amazement, looking at him in dismay ; " what is this for ? I don't comprehend, I can't understand."

" Can you really not understand ? "

" No ! " said Lizaveta Alexandrovna in perplexity.

" Cannot you understand that, seeing how depressed you are, how your health is suffering . . . . from the climate, I don't think much of my career and my factory, if I cannot take you away from here, and devote the remainder of my days to you . . . . Liza ! did you think me incapable of sacrifice ? " he added, reproachfully.

" So it is for my sake ! " said Lizaveta Alexandrovna, still bewildered, " no, Piotr Ivanitch ! " she added earnestly,

deeply moved, "for God's sake, no sacrifices for me ! I will not accept it—do you hear ? I absolutely will not ! For you to give up working, growing rich and distinguished—and for my sake ! God forbid ! I cannot bear this sacrifice ! Forgive me ; I was too petty for you, too worthless, too weak to understand and appreciate your lofty aims and noble labours. .... You should not have had such a wife."

"Magnanimity still !" said Piotr Ivanitch, shrugging his shoulders. "My intentions are not to be altered, Liza !"

"Good God ! what have I done ! I was thrown like a stone across your path, I am a hindrance to you. What a singular fate !" she added, almost in desperation. If I am not wanted, if I am not needed in life .... will not God have pity on me, will He not take me ? To be a hindrance to you——"

"You are wrong in supposing this sacrifice is hard for me to make. I have had enough of this wooden existence ! I want some repose, some peace ; and where am I to rest if not alone with you ? .... Let us go to Italy."

"Piotr Ivanitch !" she said, almost in tears, "you are good and noble .... I know you are capable of a generous deception .... but perhaps the sacrifice is useless, perhaps already .... it is too late, and you are throwing up your pursuits——"

"Have pity on me, Liza, and don't let me believe that," replied Piotr Ivanitch, "or, you will see I am not made of flint. I repeat to you, that I don't want to live with the head alone ; I am not altogether frozen yet."

She looked at him earnestly, doubtfully.

"And is that .... true ?" she asked, after a pause, "you really want peace ; you are not going away only on my account ?"

"No ; on my own account as well."

"But if it's for my sake, I wouldn't for anything, no, not for anything."

"No, no ! I am unwell, worn out. .... I want to rest."

She gave him her hand, he kissed it with warmth.

"So we are going to Italy ?" he said.

"Very well ; let us go," she answered in an expressionless voice.

Piotr Ivanitch felt a load taken off his heart. "Some good will come of it," he thought.

They sat still a long while, not knowing what to say to one another. There is no saying which would have broken the silence first if they had remained alone together longer. But rapid footsteps were heard from the adjoining apartment. Alexandr made his appearance.

How he had altered! How he had filled out, how bald he had become, how stout and rosy he had grown! With what dignity he carried his corpulence, and the decoration on his breast! His eyes were bright with enjoyment. He kissed his aunt's hand with special feelings, and pressed his uncle's hand.

"Where have you come from?" asked Piotr Ivanitch.

"Guess," replied Alexandr significantly.

"You seem in unusually good spirits to-day," said Piotr Ivanitch, looking at him inquiringly.

"I bet you a wager you won't guess!" said Alexandr.

"Ten or twelve years ago, I remember you once rushed in on me in the same way," observed Piotr Ivanitch, "and you broke something of mine too—then I guessed at once that you were in love, but now . . . can it be so again? No, it can't be; you have too much sense to—"

He looked at his wife and suddenly stopped short.

"Don't you begin to guess?" asked Alexandr.

His uncle looked at him and still deliberated.

"Not this time—are you going to be married?" he said hesitatingly.

"You have guessed!" cried Alexandr in triumph—"Congratulate me!"

"But really? To whom?" asked his uncle and aunt together.

"To the daughter of Alexandr Stepanitch."

"Really? Well, she is a wealthy match," said Piotr Ivanitch. "And the father—well?"

"I have just come from him. Why should her father not consent? Quite the contrary; he listened to my proposal with tears in his eyes, embraced me and said that now he could die happy; that he knows to whom he is entrusting his daughter's happiness . . . 'Only walk in,' he said, 'your uncle's footsteps!'"

"Did he say that? You see even here your uncle has been of use to you!"

"But what did the daughter say?" said Lizaveta Alexandrovna.

"Oh! she did, you know, as all girls do," replied Alexandr, "she said nothing, only blushed; and when I took her hand, her fingers quite played a tune upon my hand, they trembled so."

"She said nothing," remarked Lizaveta Alexandrovna. "Is it possible that you did not take the trouble to ascertain her feelings before you made your offer? Was it a matter of indifference to you? Why are you going to be married then?"

"Why! One can't be a butterfly for ever! I am sick of solitude; the time has come, *ma tante*, to settle, to found a family and set up a house of one's own, to fulfil one's duties. . . . My *fiancée* is pretty and rich. But my uncle here will tell the reasons for getting married; he used to tell me them so precisely."

Piotr Ivanitch, unobserved by his wife, made a sign to him with his hand not to quote him and to hold his tongue, but Alexandr did not observe it.

"But possibly she may not care for you," said Lizaveta Alexandrovna "it may be that she loves some one else . . . what do you say to that?"

"Uncle, what would you say? You are better at speaking than I. . . . But I will quote your own words," Alexandr, not noticing that his uncle was twisting uneasily in his seat and coughing significantly to put a stop to his speech; "if you marry for love, love will pass and you will come to live by habit; if you marry not for love, you will come too to the same result; you will get used to your wife. Love is love, and marriage is marriage; these two do not always go together, and it is better when they do not go together. . . . Isn't that right, uncle? you used to instruct me in that way, you know."

He glanced at Piotr Ivanitch and stopped suddenly, seeing that his uncle was looking at him with a face of fury. He looked open-mouthed in bewilderment at his aunt, then again at his uncle, and said no more. Lizaveta Alexandrovna shook her head mournfully.

"Well, so you are going to be married?" said Piotr Ivanitch: "it's a suitable time now, to be sure! But you were wanting to be married at three-and-twenty."

"Youth, uncle, youth!"

"Yes, it was youth."

Alexandr grew grave and then smiled.

"What is it?" inquired Piotr Ivanitch.

"Oh, I was struck by an incongruity."

"What incongruity?"

"When I was in love," replied Alexandre meditatively, "I was not able to marry."

"And now you are getting married, and you are not able to love," added his uncle, and both laughed.

"It follows from that, uncle, that you were right in your theory that suitability is the principal—"

Piotr Ivanitch again turned a face of intense fury upon him. Alexandre was silent, not knowing what to think.

"You are going to be married at five-and-thirty," said Piotr Ivanitch, "that is quite proper. But you remember what a delirium you fell into then, how you vociferated, unequal marriages revolted you, that the bride was dragged, like a victim decked in flowers and diamonds, and thrust into the embraces of an elderly creature, generally unattractive and bald. How about your own head?"

"Youth, youth, uncle! I did not understand the realities of things," said Alexandre, smoothing his hair with his hand.

"The realities of things," continued Piotr Ivanitch; "but do you remember how desperate you were over that—what was her name?—Natasha—was it? Furious jealousy, transports, heavenly bliss. What has become of all that?"

"Now, now, uncle, stop!" said Alexandre, getting red.

"Where is the titanic passion, tears?"

"Uncle!"

"What? You have done with sincere outpourings, you have done with 'gathering yellow flowers.' You are tired of living alone."

"Oh, if that's it, uncle, I am not the only one who has been in love, raved, been jealous, wept. Wait a minute, I have a written document in my possession."

He pulled a pocket-book out of his pocket, and after fumbling some time among the papers, he drew out an old, almost worn-out and yellow sheet of paper.

"Here, *ma tante*," he said, "is the proof that my uncle was not always such a rational, ironical, and practical man. He too knew something of sincere outpourings and gave

expression to them not on official paper and with special ink. For four years I have carried that scrap about with me and kept waiting for an opportunity to confront my uncle with it. I had all but forgotten it, but you yourself reminded me."

"What nonsense is this? I don't understand it a bit," said Piotr Ivanitch, looking at the scrap of paper.

"Here, then, look at it."

Alexandr held the paper up before his uncle's eyes. Suddenly Piotr Ivanitch's face darkened.

"Give it up, give it up, Alexandr!" he cried hurriedly and tried to snatch it. But Alexandr quickly drew back his hand.

Lizaveta Alexandrovna looked at him with curiosity.

"No, uncle, I won't give it up," said Alexandr, "until you acknowledge here, before my aunt, that you too were in love once, like me, and everybody . . . or else this document shall be put into her hands to your eternal reproach."

"Brute!" cried Piotr Ivanitch, "what trick are you playing on me?"

"You don't want me to——".

"Come, come, I have been in love; give it up."

"No, kindly say that you were raving, jealous?"

"Well, I was jealous and raving," said Piotr Ivanitch, scowling.

"You shed tears?"

"No, I didn't shed tears."

"It's not true! I was told so by my auntie; own up."

"I can't bring my tongue to utter it, Alexandr. Perhaps I will try now——"

"*Ma tante*, take the document."

"Show me, what is it?" she inquired, holding out her hand.

"I shed tears, I did! Give it up!" cried Piotr Ivanitch in desperation.

"By the lake?"

"By the lake?"

"And you gathered yellow flowers?"

"I did. There you have everything. Give it up!"

"No, not everything; give me your word of honour, that you will consign my follies to eternal oblivion and give up taunting me with them."

"I give you my word of honour."

Alexandr gave him the paper. Piotr Ivanitch snatched it, lighted a taper and burnt the scrap of paper in it.

"Tell me at least what it was about?" inquired Lizaveta Alexandrovna.

"No, my dear, that I will not tell at the Last Judgment," replied Piotr Ivanitch; "but is it possible I wrote that? can it be?"

"You did, uncle!" interposed Alexandr, "I can repeat, if you like, what was written in it; I know it by heart: 'Angel, adored by me—'"

"Alexandr! we shall be enemies for life!" cried Piotr Ivanitch angrily.

"They are ashamed, as though it were a crime, and of what!" said Lizaveta Alexandrovna; "of first, pure love."

She shrugged her shoulders and turned away from them.

"In that love there was so much that was stupid," said Piotr Ivanitch gently, insinuatingly. "Between us now there was no question of sincere outpourings, of flowers, and walks by moonlight . . . . but you love me, you know."

"Yes, I am thoroughly . . . . used to you," replied Lizaveta Alexandrovna vacantly.

Piotr Ivanitch began to stroke his whiskers despondently.

"Well, uncle," inquired Alexandr, in an undertone, "isn't that what you want?"

Piotr Ivanitch made a sign to him to signify, "be silent."

"It's pardonable in Piotr Ivanitch to think and behave like this," said Lizaveta Alexandrovna, "he has been the same so long, and no one, I imagine, has known him otherwise; but in you, Alexandr, I did not expect such a change."

She sighed.

"What do you sigh for, *ma tante?*" he asked.

"For the Alexandr of old days," she replied.

"Is it possible you could have wished me, *ma tante*, to remain what I was ten years ago?" said Alexandr. "Uncle is right in calling it foolish sentimentality."

The countenance of Piotr Ivanitch began to grow wrathful. Alexandr stopped.

"No, not what you were ten years ago," said Lizaveta Alexandrovna, "but four years ago; do you remember what a letter you wrote me from the country? How splendid you were then!"

"I fancy I was a sentimentalist then, too," said Alexandr.

"No, you were not sentimental. Then you had interpreted and understood life for yourself; then you were splendid, noble, wise. . . . Why did you not remain so?" Why was it only in words, on paper, and not in fact? This brightness peeped out like the sun from behind a cloud—for one instant."

"You mean to say, *ma tante*, that now I . . . am not wise . . . nor noble?"

"God forbid, no! But now you are wise and noble . . . in some other way, not in my way——"

"What's to be done, *ma tante*," said Alexandr with a sonorous sigh, "it's the age. I progress with the times; one cannot stay behind. You see I follow my uncle, I quote his words."

"Alexandr!" said Piotr Ivanitch, savagely, "let us go to my study for a minute; I want to have a word with you."

They went into the study.

"What possessed you to appeal to me to-day?" said Piotr Ivanitch. "Do you see what a state my wife is in?"

"What is it?" asked Alexandr in alarm.

"Haven't you noticed anything? Why, it's come to my throwing up my position, my business—everything, and going to Italy with her!"

"What are you saying, uncle!" cried Alexandr, in bewilderment, "why, this year you are bound to be in the privy council."

"Yes, but if the privy councillor's wife is dying!"

He walked despondently three times up and down the room.

"No," he said, "my career is over! My work is done; Fate does not permit to advance further—so be it!" He made a gesture of abnegation.

"We had better talk about you," he said; "you seem to be following in my footsteps."

"I couldn't do better, uncle," added Alexandr.

"Yes," Piotr continued. "At a little over thirty . . . a

councillor, a good official salary, while by unofficial work you are making a large income. And now, in due course, you are to marry a wealthy . . . Yes, the Adouevs are making their mark. You are following in my steps except for the back-ache."

"But I sometimes suffer with it already," said Alexandr, rubbing his spine.

"It's all excellent, of course, except the spinal trouble," continued Piotr Ivanitch. "I did not think, I confess, that anything much could be made of you when you came up here. You were always occupying your brain with spiritual questions, flying off to the clouds. But that's all over now, and thank God for it! I would say to you: Continue to follow in my footsteps, except——"

"Except in what, uncle?"

"Oh, I should have liked to give you some advice in regard to your future wife."

"What is it? That's curious."

"But no," said Piotr Ivanitch, after a short pause. "I am afraid of making things worse. Act as you feel yourself; perhaps you will guess. Let us rather talk of your marriage. They say your *fiancée* has a dowry of two hundred thousand—really!"

"Yes; her father gives her two hundred thousand, and she has a hundred left her from her mother."

"Then that's three hundred!" exclaimed Piotr Ivanitch, almost with awe.

"And moreover, he said to-day that he would give us his five hundred serfs, now to be at our full disposal, on condition of our allowing him seven thousand a year. He will live with us."

Piotr jumped up from his chair with an alacrity not like him.

"Stop, stop!" he said. "You are making me dizzy. What did you tell me? Say it again. How much?"

"Five hundred serfs and three hundred thousand in money," Alexandr repeated.

"You are not joking!"

"A likely joke, uncle!"

"And the property . . . is not mortgaged?" asked Piotr Ivanitch softly, not moving from his place.

"No."

